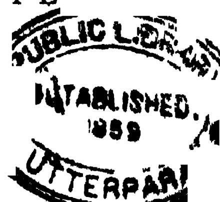


ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON

A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK

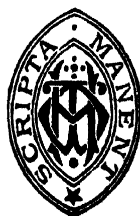


BY

ARTHUR WAUGH

B.A OXON

SECOND EDITION



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TO

AUSTIN DOBSON

'Even the gods must go:
Only the lofty Rhyme
Not countless years o'erthrow,
Not long array of time.'

PREFACE

THIS volume was completed, all but the last page of biography, when the sudden illness of Lord Tennyson startled me at the task of minute revision, which I had hoped might long be my pleasant occupation. Such as it is, the book has been my companion during the last two years, and grew into shape as the natural result of a love for the poetry, and a desire to possess in convenient shape all that could be recorded of the life of one whom I regarded with sincere enthusiasm

In process of time, no doubt, a life of Lord Tennyson will be written, based upon material which at the present moment is in the possession of the family. The present volume does not pretend to be the official life of the late Poet Laureate, and expressly deprecates the supposition that it is built upon any but public data; nevertheless it will not be found to be altogether devoid of novelty. Perhaps I may claim to have searched more patiently and widely than any of my predecessors for every available record; and I certainly have left no important source of likely information untested. It is my hope, therefore, that without trespassing upon any one's privacy, or committing any act of literary indiscretion, I have been

successful in making a study of Lord Tennyson more complete, more detailed, and, I hope, more accurate than any at present in the possession of the public.

I must acknowledge, in the first instance, the kind help and sympathetic interest of Mr. J. Dykes Campbell, who generously placed at my disposal his valuable collection of Tennysoniana; and, secondly, of Mr. Austin Dobson, who has not only encouraged me in my task, but has allowed me to attach his name to this volume.

I also desire to express my indebtedness to Mr. W. Aldis Wright's *Life and Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, and Mr. T. Wemyss Reid's *Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, from which much valuable information has been gathered.

The second edition has been amplified by several personal notes for which I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, Professor F. T. Palgrave, and Dr. A. H. Japp.

Other aid and other encouragement, which I had hoped to acknowledge, must here be left, by promise, to the more difficult tribute of silence.

ARTHUR WAUGH.

December 1892

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CHAPTER I

LINCOLNSHIRE

THE study of a life and work, the beginnings and growth of which, while they lie beyond our own memory, are still within the limits of present report, is beset with many difficulties. Reminiscences and sentiments which are purely personal stand in the way of clear judgment, trivial anecdotes, often half or wholly untrue, are still in the air, and the voices of sound and unsound criticism are too closely blended for an unprejudiced view of the position which the author's work will ultimately attain. But apart from these difficulties, which are common to all studies in contemporary literature, a life of Alfred Tennyson is made the harder to write by his own discouragement of the attempt. Once or twice in the history of letters the situation has repeated itself. Shakespeare's 'Cursed be he who moves my bones,' Thackeray's 'Let there be none of this nonsense about me after my death,' Gordon's 'Better be dead than praised,' and Tennyson's 'My Shakespeare's curse on clown and knave who will not let his ashes rest,' are expressions of an identical feeling, coloured a little differently by

the variety in the temperament of the speakers. Such a sentiment may, one feels, be uttered with all sincerity at the moment, yet with no intention of giving it the weight and authority of an ultimatum; still the sentiment, once written down, remains to confront the biographer at the outset. Reflections and memories of this kind have filled the present writer with a very genuine diffidence in undertaking a work which reverent affection has made in every sense a labour of love.

For, before he can write a word about Tennyson, he is bound to excuse himself for writing about him at all, and to make his peace with that implacable deprecation of 'the irreverent doom of those that wear the poet's crown.' The cause might be pleaded in many ways. The writer could, perhaps, defend his right to speak on the ground of his intention in speaking; he could maintain that what has been written, though it might indeed be worthier, has been written in no spirit of irreverent paragraph-making, no desire to rush in where better taste would shrink to tread, but with every instinct of respect and veneration. The case could conceivably be stated so. But the present writer prefers to keep the inconsiderable shadow of himself in the background, and to base his excuse not on his own treatment of the life, but on the very nature of the life itself. There are lives which require much tact in the writing, much weighing of what shall be said and what left unsaid, much veiling of ugly scars, much concealment of deformities. It is not so with Tennyson. His life has been so peaceful, so far removed from the smoke and stir of the world of petty aims and narrow

ambitions, so free from passages to be passed over in silence, and events to be excused, that nothing, it seems, but grossly bad taste or hopelessly incorrect judgment on the part of the writer, could cause him to offend seriously in his work. And he can scarcely be condemned as too sanguine, who trusts at least to escape an accusation of such faults as these.

The life of Tennyson remains to be written. Materials must exist which are at present inaccessible to any but the poet's nearest relatives; the few who were privileged to know him intimately have, no doubt, much to tell of him that must here be left untold. The present work makes no claim—indeed, it could ill afford to do so—to give a detailed and finished portrait, or even an exact epitome of events. Yet, until an authoritative biography be forthcoming, there must, we hope, be some who would wish to know a little more of a life, the high thought, earnestness, and love of which are so clearly written in the work it leaves behind it. For such readers, what reverence and sincere admiration could do has been done in the present pages.

Of the many temptations to artifice and ingenuity which beset the biographer, none is more alluring than the charm of insisting upon the influence which the surroundings of childhood exercise upon the after life. It is so easy to draw parallels and trace tendencies, and to appear rather clever in the process of so doing, that one is apt to forget that this is nothing but fancy after all, and that Truth is not found on these surface-levels. Lives which become,

crowded with events in the period immediately following childhood are not greatly moved by the earliest influences of all. The power of childhood over later years belongs rather to uneventful lives, and Tennyson's was just the kind of life to fall under its spell. The character and scenery of his home-life had a more than ordinary share in his development, for he lived in its immediate neighbourhood, in daily familiarity with the 'grey hillside,' 'the seven elms and poplars four,' the brook and 'the ridged wolds,' for the first twenty years of his life: the period, in short, during which impressions are most vivid, and the mind readiest to receive them. The influences of the home-life and home-scenery set their mark upon him very early, and never left him. More than forty years after Tennyson went up to Cambridge, his friend FitzGerald could trace them in 'The Last Tournament,' in a description of a wave spending itself upon the shore. 'That was Lincolnshire, I know,' FitzGerald wrote.

It was in Lincolnshire, at Somersby Rectory, that Alfred Tennyson was born, on Sunday, August 6, 1809. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, LL.D., held this living, to which he was appointed in 1807, in connection with those of Grimsby and Bag Enderby; his mother was a daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche, Vicar of Louth, the town in which Alfred's schooldays were afterwards passed. Somersby itself is but a tiny village; in 1821 there were sixty-two inhabitants in all. Alfred was one of twelve children, seven of whom were sons, Frederick and Charles (afterwards Charles Tennyson Turner), poets

both, being his seniors. The home and its surroundings were full of a picturesque charm. The rectory is a rather low, two-storeyed building, on one side separated from the road by a narrow drive, upon the other faced by a mossy lawn with a stretch of meadowland beyond. A quaint old-fashioned dining-hall, with mediæval windows, built by the poet's father, extends



SOMERSBY CHURCH

the house to the right, as one looks up at the Rectory from the lawn. It was in this hall that the family was wont to gather on winter evenings for round games and conversation. On the north a straggling road winds up the steep hill towards the summit of the wold, while on the south a pebbly brook babbles along close to the edge of the garden. Not at all the sort of

scenery one associates with the fen-country: instead of dreary waters and low-lying levels, the landscape sweeps up into hills and drops into valleys, full of the sights and sounds of country-life, and rich in flowery hollows and patches of tangled meadow-land. It requires no strain of imagination to catch the spirit of Tennyson's song here, where the little brook of his poem dances along through the heart of the country, chattering as it goes, while not far from Somersby the traveller is shown an old, half-ruined grange which fancy dreams over as the probable original of Mariana's prison.

The process of identification, however, has led more than one writer into difficulties. Poetry is not always inspired by its surroundings. 'Break, break, break,' for instance, has been generally ascribed to the influence of Clevedon. But we have Tennyson's own denial. 'It was made,' he said, 'in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning.'

Such, among these Lincolnshire lanes, was the poet's home, and from stray allusions here and there we get glimpses of the inmates of the Rectory itself. The father was a man of many interests, something of a poet and an artist, much of a scholar and a linguist, and, above all, of powerful physique. The poet's mother was of a sweet and tender disposition. A story is told of village roughs who traded on her gentleness by beating their dogs within hearing of the Rectory windows, in hope of a 'tip' to induce them to spare the unfortunate victims of their greed. A combination of the parents' qualities often reappears in the children, and it seems only natural to trace to the father's

influence the power and energy of 'Maud' and 'The Idylls,' to the mother's the tender passion of 'In Memoriam' and 'The Princess.'

Such specious fancies are, perhaps, a little too artificial to be insisted upon with any freedom; but much of the poet's earlier life has to be left to conjecture and imagination of one kind and another; for the actual, palpable facts that come to hand are very meagre indeed. Still the few there are have value. Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, in a delightfully picturesque paper published some years since in *Harper's Magazine*, and since reprinted in book-form, gives us a glimpse of Alfred Tennyson when he was no more than five years old. She tells of him caught and swept along by the wind down the Rectory garden, crying as he was hurried past: 'I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind.' It was his first line of poetry, and the idea was not to leave him with the moment. The sound of the storm has always had a voice for Tennyson, as clear in later years as when it first whispered to his babyhood. The miserable mother in 'Rizpah' catches 'Willy's voice in the wind'; Arthur, sleeping before his last battle, hears the ghost of Gawain shrilling through the wandering wind: 'Hollow! Hollow, all delight!' To the nurse in 'The Children's Hospital' the voice of the wind blends mysteriously with 'the motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm and the darkness without.' One cannot help fancying—nor is it, perhaps, too curious a fancy—that this story of his childhood, told to the poet afterwards, has recurred to him, half unconsciously, when from time to time his mind was

dwelling on the idea of storm and tumult. The wind has always had a voice that speaks to him; as every common sight and sound of nature has spoken to him, and inspired him with a new interpretation.

A story of this kind now and again seems to show the bent of his mind; but in the nursery and schoolroom days Alfred was not the most prominent member of the family. A retiring and reserved disposition, rare in children, rendered him comparatively unattractive; and Charles, who, though a year his senior, was much more boyish and high-spirited, naturally had qualities which were quicker to make friends for him. Charles was, indeed, a universal favourite; and a story told of the two brothers seems to indicate that, with all his youthful spirits, he actually developed the earlier of the two. One Sunday, when the rest were going to church, Charles suggested that Alfred should fill up the time by writing some poetry, giving him as a subject the flowers in the Rectory garden. By the time the service was finished Alfred had filled his slate with verses, which he hastened to submit to his brother's criticism upon his return. Their attitude to each other, the mutual relation of poet and critic, shows, as Mr. H. J. Jennings has shrewdly remarked, that Charles was regarded, at any rate by his younger brother, as the cleverer of the two.

These verses on the garden flowers were not Alfred's only attempt at youthful poetry. The next time he essayed verse his grandfather was the task-master, and the subject the death of the poet's grandmother. For this first 'In Memoriam' the critic

slipped half a sovereign into the boy's hand, with the remark—just a little like a snub,—'That is the first money, my boy, that you 've made by poetry; and—take my word for it—it will be the last!'

To those who are rich in the wisdom that comes after the event, the sentence sounds like a text for a little sermon on the futility of prophecy.

A piece of verse, 'On the Death of my Grandmother,' occurs in *Poems by Two Brothers*, and this, no doubt, was an emended version of the early effort. It opens quietly, and with a certain sober dignity.

'There on her bier she sleeps!
E'en yet her face its native sweetness keeps.
Ye need not mourn above that faded form,
Her soul defies the ravage of the worm;
Her better half has sought its heavenly rest,
Unstain'd, unharm'd, unfetter'd, unopprest;
And far above all worldly pain and woe,
She sees the God she almost saw below.'

By this time the application to poetry had become continuous. Between his eleventh and twelfth birthdays Alfred wrote an epic poem of some four or five thousand octosyllabic lines in the manner of Sir Walter Scott; and three years later he was busy upon a drama in iambics, a chorus from which was afterwards printed in *Poems, chiefly Lyrical.* These early excursions into poetry were much more ambitious than the work to which he applied himself during his Cambridge Terms; but the young mind is always blind to difficulty.

The children do not seem to have played many games in the old rectory garden, which must have been very quiet in the dreamy summer afternoons. At that time cricket was not in full vogue; football

was even less popular. A kind of 'King of the Castle' seems to have been the boys' favourite game; they found scope in it, perhaps, for fancy and imagination beyond the mere pleasure of the exercise. Another imaginative game is related in Frederick Tennyson's letters as having enlivened his aunt's garden. 'I and



HOLYWELL GLEN.

Charles and Alfred,' he says, 'enthusiastic children, used to play at being emperors of China, each appropriating a portion of the old echoing gardens as our domain.' In the evening they told long stories round the fire, and Alfred—in amusing contrast to the quintessential narrative of his prime—is reported to have spent months in the recital of his tale—'The Old Horse.' The prolixity was to pass with boyhood; it is said that, in after years, he pronounced 'Mr. Sludge

the Medium' terribly long-winded, adding, 'I'd have done the thing in a third of the space.'

Meanwhile, the lessons were not neglected. Every day the boys walked to Cadney's village school in Holywell Glen, a deep, shady nook, enshrining the well which tradition magnified into a second Pool of Bethesda. Alfred, we learn, was ill at numbers; and one of his schoolfellows, a little his senior, earned many a tip from the Rector of Somersby by coaching the future poet in his mathematics after school-hours. They must have made an easy-going, rather primitive, and very picturesque life, these early days in Lincolnshire. Bird-nesting on bright spring mornings, rambles by the brook on summer half-holidays to Stockworth, Harrington, or Scrivelsby, gradual familiarity with all the life and growth of the countryside—these were the earliest influences that touched the children of Somersby Rectory, and inspired that harmony of mind with Nature which was afterwards to prove so distinctive a characteristic of the Laureate's verse.

> 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair,
> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
> In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.'

It needed many years of communion with Nature to give voice to that feeling, that sense of something wanting, that stir of sweet regret that is so easily invoked by the sight of these scenes of loneliness: but the early days at Somersby helped him to that sympathy with Nature which ripened to maturity in his later verse.

And so one hesitates to pass too rudely over the

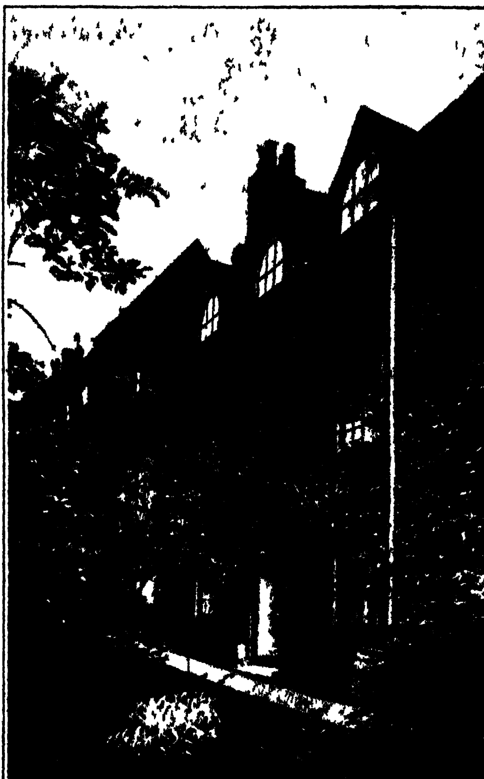
days of this childhood; for, uneventful as they were, they were at work all the while on the fibre of the poet's spirit. The spirit was a little too solitary, no doubt, a little too shy and over-reserved: it would have been better for Alfred Tennyson, perhaps, if he had gone early to a great public school and mixed more with action,—fallen sooner into the rush and swirl of life, and had less time to dream. For his schooldays seem to have been unusually free from



BRIDGE STREET, LOUTH.

excitement. Cadney's village school was followed by Louth Grammar School, where Alfred went as a new boy in the Christmas term of the year after Waterloo. Under Mr. Waite's mastership Louth was a drowsy little school; and the terms that Tennyson spent there seem to have brought very

little with them to be remembered afterwards. Indeed, there appears to be but one solitary reminiscence of his schooldays to record; and, since it is the one story, it has been told over and over again, so often as to be scarcely worth re-telling. But where there is little, there can be no choice, and our single glimpse of this time must be the poet's own recollection of the festivities on the occasion of the coronation of George the Fourth, when he and the other boys were decked out in rosettes, and there were processions and merry-making.



WESTGATE PLACE, LOUTH.

Alfred seems to have left Louth Grammar School after some four years with Mr. Waite, and was consequently not twelve years old when his school career finally closed. Mrs. Tennyson's mother, Mrs. Fytche, lived with her daughter, Miss Mary Anne Fytche, at Westgate Place; and while Alfred was at Louth, his parents often came and stayed

with their relatives, to be near him. When he left school he went home again to be under his father's tuition. The father was a strong, sensible man, without doubt, full of interests, and an admirable companion for his sons; but the continued parental supervision was a mistake. A boy of Alfred's sensitive and imaginative temperament needed to be more among his contemporaries and less by himself. However, his parents thought otherwise; he came home again, and during the next few years the brothers were together at Somersby.

We learn enough of this period to feel that the studies must have been rather desultory, and the amusements simple enough. Their father's teaching was supplemented by the classics of a Roman Catholic priest and the music of a teacher at Horncastle. For half-holidays they had the endless pleasure of wild rambles over the country with their pipes in their mouths—for Alfred had begun to smoke already. An early love for the seashore was fostered by frequent visits to Mablethorpe, a small town in a flat country, where the sand slowly shifts into banks, and builds up a barrier between the sea and the fields. Here the days would be spent in much the same way as at Somersby—a little roaming about the shore, a little verse-making, and a good deal of dreaming. It was an idle time, but it had its interests.

An affection for animal life was one of Alfred's earliest characteristics. One of the rooms on the second floor was set apart as his den, and here he would sit of an evening, pondering his verses. One night, as he leant from the window, he heard an owl hooting; and, with a faculty for imitation which was strong in him,

he cried back to the bird. The poet's 'tu-whit, tu-whoo' was so natural that the owl flew to the window, and into the room, where it was captured and kept for a long while as a pet. Ingenuity has traced to this story the origin of the later poem 'The Owl,' which catches with singular fidelity an echo of the bird's cry.

And if we try to take the character out of its surroundings, and to find for ourselves what manner of boy Alfred Tennyson was at this time, we get the clearest insight into his real nature in the anecdote, recorded by Mrs. Ritchie, that tells of the effect of Byron's death upon the household at Somersby.

'Byron is dead!' The whole world seemed full of the cry: and the boy crept away to think its meaning out alone, and to cut 'Byron is dead!' into the sandstone. We get very close to the heart of the child here: the reserve with which he chooses to be by himself, his appreciation of the loss, and his record of it, carved with his knife in the stone, seem to show us the Alfred Tennyson of the moment very vividly indeed. There is the inclination to solitude on the one hand, and the strength of sympathy and affection on the other, the two dissonant elements in that strange combination which makes him such a powerfully interesting figure. He has had friends who have seen the one side only, and thought him brusque and unsociable; he has had other friends who have shut their eyes to this side of his character, and preferred to dwell on the tender and lovable element. But the true portrait must be frank and candid: and the subject is the more engaging for its contradictory complexity. The little Alfred, creeping off alone to

engrave his poet's cenotaph, was a very perfect foreshadowing of that older Alfred who would be silent to his friends for years, and yet in any moment of their trouble send them the strengthening assurance of his tender sympathy. This was the Tennyson who, after long silence, wrote to his old friend, Lord Houghton, condoling with him upon his wife's death; and wrote in such a strain as this:—

'I was the other day present at a funeral here, and one of the chief mourners reached me her hand silently almost over the grave, and I as silently gave her mine. No words were possible: and this little note, that can do really nothing to help you in your sorrow, is just such a reaching of the hand to you, my old college comrade of more than forty years' standing, to show you that I think of you.'

But all this comparison has carried us a long way from the little boy sitting, knife in hand, by his boulder of sandstone. There is little enough to record, however, of these years between Louth and Cambridge. Frederick went up to Trinity in 1827, and Charles and Alfred were left together at Somersby, living the same home-life—picking up some learning from books (the first volume of poems proves that), and more from Nature,—taking long walks across the country, vying with each other in poetry from time to time; wanting nothing—save an occasional half-sovereign.

For to many other excellent qualities (it is whispered), the Rector of Somersby added a talent for economy, and Charles and Alfred were never supplied with a surplus of pocket-money. Now and then, when money was needed for some excursion or other amusement, they were sorely put about to scrape together enough for their purpose; and on one

occasion when they were discussing ways and means in the saddle-room, they were overheard by the family coachman. Appreciating the position at once, and racking his brains for a plan, the servant bethought himself of the verses which his young masters were always writing,—they could not be much good, still they might serve. The idea pleased the boys: it opened a pleasant prospect of a road that led to both wealth and fame at once. They proceeded to make a collection of their best verses, and found they had quite enough for a respectable little volume. So, under the title of *Poems by Two Brothers*, with a quotation from Martial—'Haec nos novimus esse nihil'—on the title-page, the precious manuscript was submitted to Mr. Jackson, a bookseller of Louth, who offered the young poets ten pounds for the copyright of their work, a sum which, according to some accounts, was subsequently doubled. Ten pounds was great riches to the brothers; the bargain was struck, and Alfred Tennyson had begun his career as a poet.

Poems by Two Brothers, now a very rare little volume, consists of 102 poems which occupy 228 pages. Quotation and footnote abound, both Latin and English authors being cited with freedom. The separate poems were in the manuscript signed with the initials of the brothers; but the signatures were cancelled before the book was published, and any attempt at distinguishing between the work of the authors can only be of value as an effort of ingenuity. For, while the verses show considerable

any evidence of separate individuality. The young poets enter the field with a very boyish little piece of self-depreciation: 'We have passed the Rubicon, and we leave the rest to fate; though its edict may create a fruitless regret that we ever emerged from "the shade" and courted notoriety.' Fate issued no special edict in their case, however: the volume attracted scarcely any notice. It was improbable it should: for the work was inevitably immature. The poems (it is the habit of youthful verse), take to themselves a quaint assumption of sentiments and situations quite foreign to the experience of the writers. The young poets are continually projecting themselves into old age, and looking back upon their youth as a treasure that is lost to them. This is how they sing:

'Memory! dear enchanter!
Why bring back to view
Dreams of youth, which banter
All that e'er was true?

. . . . .

'Round every palm-tree, springing
With bright fruit in the waste,
A mournful asp is clinging
Which sours it to our taste.

. . . . .

'I stand like some lone tower
Of former days remaining,
Within whose place of power
The midnight owl is plaining.'

And again:

'The vices of my life arise,
Pourtrayed in shapes, alas! too true,
And not one beam of hope breaks through
To cheer my old and aching eyes.'

And in another place the poet is full of reflection upon the memory of youth as it recurs to age:

'For youth—whate'er may be its petty woes,
Its trivial sorrows—disappointments—fears,
As oh in haste life's wintry current flows—
Still claims, and still receives, its debt of tears.'

Indeed, the authors are very tolerant of sorrow: there is a little poem in praise of tears, and another of consolation; and the latter is, perhaps, of all the verses, the nearest akin to Alfred Tennyson's later work:

'Why should we sorrow for the dead?
Our life on earth is but a span;
They tread the path that all must tread,
They die the common death of man.'

'Antony to Cleopatra' is generally considered the most successful poem in the volume; and it has unquestionably a share of fire and movement:

'Then when the shriekings of the dying
Were heard along the wave,
Soul of my soul! I saw thee flying;
I followed thee, to save.
The thunder of the brazen prows
O'er Actium's ocean rung;
Fame's garland faded from my brows,
Her wreath away I flung.
I sought, I saw, I heard but thee:
For what to love was victory?'

But the chief interest of the book lies in its evidence of the poetry which was most congenial to the taste of the young authors. A large proportion of the work is imitative, and the principal influence is Byron's. Here and there we catch echoes of Scott and Moore:

'Oh! Harp of my Fathers!
No more in the hall
The souls of the chieftains
Thy strains shall enthrall.
One sweep will I give thee
And wake thy bold swell;
Then, thou friend of my bosom
For ever farewell.'

And in another place:

'The low, dull gale can scarcely stir
The branches of that blackening fir,
Which betwixt me and heav'n flings wide
Its shadowy boughs on either side,
And o'er yon granite rock appears
Its giant form of many years.
And the shrill owlet's desolate wail
Comes to mine ear along the gale,
As, list'ning to its lengthened tones
I dimly pace the Vale of Bones.'

It is to Byron, however, that the brothers turn most readily for their inspiration; and at times they catch his manner with a fidelity that is almost amusing.

'We meet no more—the die is cast,
The chain is broke that tied us,
Our every hope on earth is past,
And there's no helm to guide us:
We meet no more—the roaring blast
And angry seas divide us.'

There is a touch of Byron here: but in the following there is more than a touch—it is a very palpable hit:

'I saw thee, Bassorah! in splendour retiring
Where thy waves and thy walls in their majesty meet
I saw the bright glory thy pinnacles firing,
And the broad vassal river that rolls at thy feet.'

And even again:

'Like the fiends of destruction they rush on their way,
The vulture behind them is wild for his prey;
And the spirits of death, and the demons of wrath,
Wave the gloom of their wings o'er the desolate path.

For thy glory is past, and thy splendour is dim,
And the cup of thy sorrow is full to the brim;
And where is the chief in thy realms to abide
The "Monarch of Nations," the strength of his pride?'

This selection, already too long, may fitly close with

a quotation from a little poem of an easy melody and singularly individual touch :

'In Savoy's vales, with green array'd,
  A thousand blossoms flower,
'Neath the odorous shade by the larches made,
  In their own ambrosial bower :
But sweeter still,
  Like the cedars that rise
On Lebanon's hill
  To the pure blue skies,
Is the breath of the Maid of Savoy.'

The volume apparently elicited but a single notice, in *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review.* But it was remembered in the neighbourhood and at the Grammar School, where Edward Eyre, entering as a new boy some two years later, heard that two of the old boys had published a book of poems, and had actually received ten pounds for the copyright. It seemed a dazzling achievement to the newcomer.

With this little publication the two brothers entered upon the literary life hand in hand. The money which the publication brought them was spent upon a tour around the Lincolnshire churches. And it is pleasant to remember that when, more than fifty years afterwards, Charles Tennyson Turner's sonnets were collected into a volume, the book was prefaced by a poem by his younger brother, recalling with a grateful memory this early effort together :

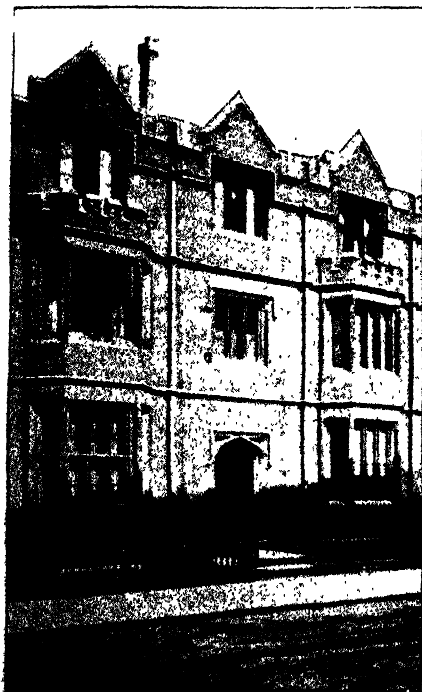
'When all my griefs were shared with thee,
  And all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me ;
  May all thou art be mine !'

The interest of that first partnership of boyhood was not to be impaired by the successes and disappointments of the more memorable years to come.

CHAPTER II

CAMBRIDGE

In October 1828, Charles and Alfred joined Frederick at Trinity College, Cambridge, where the eldest brother had already distinguished himself by winning the Chancellor's medal for Greek verse, the subject of his composition being 'Egypt.' The two younger brothers were, we learn from Professor C. V. Stanford, entered on the books on November 9, 1827, and matriculated on February 20 of the following year. Alfred Tennyson first lived in Rose Crescent over a Tobacconist's shop; but at the end of their first year he and Charles moved to lodgings in Trumpington Street, next door to the gate of Corpus. Unused to the society of men of their own age, they



TENNYSON'S ROOMS, CORPUS BUILDINGS.

were at first reserved and nervous to a degree that was almost painful. There is a story told of them, that, starting for College with every intention of dining in Hall, they would often find their courage fail them when they saw the full tables and heard the buzz of conversation, and hurry back to their lodgings dinnerless. The late Master of Trinity, Dr. W. H. Thompson, we are told, was wont to say that it was on one such occasion, as Alfred Tennyson stood proud and shy at the doors of the lighted hall, that he noticed him for the first time, and asked a fellow-undergraduate his name.

But though the shyness lived on, the solitude was broken through; and the brothers soon fell into a set of literary spirits, akin to themselves, many of whom were destined to more than ordinary prominence. Among the earliest of these new friends was the one who was to exert so pleasantly powerful an influence upon Alfred Tennyson's life, Arthur Henry Hallam himself. Hallam was nearly two years Tennyson's junior (he was born at Bedford Place in February 1811), but in learning and experience he was undoubtedly the poet's better. He had travelled on more than one occasion into Germany and Switzerland, while his schooldays had been passed at Eton, in vivid contrast to the drowsy education at Louth. At school he had read poetry with an eagerness that found especial satisfaction in Sappho, Lucretius, Catullus, Dante, Milton, Fletcher, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, and, above all, Shakespeare; had taken an active part in the school debates, and had written in the *Eton Miscellany* several prize essays and a

story in verse, the scene of which was laid among the Lakes of Killarney. After leaving school he had visited Italy with his parents, and came into residence at Trinity in October 1828, occupying rooms in the New Court. Such is a formal summary of Hallam's early life, but it is the man himself who appeals to us more tenderly than his achievements. 'As near perfection as mortal man can be,' said Alfred Tennyson: and the singular sweetness of his disposition seems to have left a keener impression on his contemporaries than all the lore and logic which he brought from the schools. Henry Alford shared Tennyson's enthusiasm: 'His was such a lovely nature that life seemed to have nothing more to teach him.' With Hallam were many others, who soon became numbered in the list of Tennyson's closest friends. Richard Monckton Milnes and R. C. Trench, W. H. Thompson (afterwards Master of



HALLAM'S ROOMS, NEW COURT, TRINITY.

Trinity) and J. W. Blakesley, F. D. Maurice, and James Spedding, Henry Alford, Charles Merivale, G. S. Venables, E. R. Kennedy, and E. Lushington were all members of the society known as 'The Apostles' at the time that Tennyson joined it. This association, started some eight years previously, and limited to twelve members, was, and I believe is, a small debating society which has drawn to itself all the brightest literary promise of the college. They held discussions :

'A band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labour, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land;

And one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string,
And one would pierce an outer ring
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master bowman, he
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face?'

Hallam was the foremost of Tennyson's friends, but in point of time he was not actually the first. On the very day on which he came up to Cambridge Tennyson was caught by a face which charmed him at first sight, and drew from him the remark: 'That looks the best-tempered fellow I ever saw.' 'The best-tempered fellow' was Milnes, and the friendship which Tennyson coveted was soon realised.

To Spedding's inspiration were due the lines :

'You ask me why, though ill at ease.' They are almost a version in metre of a speech made by Spedding on Political Unions at the Cambridge Debating Hall in 1832. His name is, of course, also connected with the beautiful poem in which Tennyson speaks of his father's death.

Tennyson, it is reported, never read a paper to 'The Apostles' himself. On one occasion he had prepared one on the subject of 'Ghosts'; but when the meeting was assembled, his old shyness reasserted itself, and he tore the essay into pieces before them all, and threw the scraps into the fire. His prowess was to come to him through other channels.

Poetry still held his heart of hearts. During his first year at Cambridge, he wrote the first two parts of 'The Lover's Tale,' which were printed in 1833, and then withdrawn from the press. He felt, as he tells us himself, 'the imperfection of the poem.' But a few copies, with many misprints to mar them, fell into the hands of one of his friends, who distributed them among Tennyson's Trinity associates without the poet's knowledge. To the survival of some of these copies and their subsequent piracy we owe the fact that some fifty years afterwards the Laureate published the whole poem in a revised form with a third part added. 'The Lover's Tale,' then, was suppressed; but in the meanwhile, Tennyson had been at work upon a poem which defied suppression. The subject of the Chancellor's Prize Poem for the year was 'Timbuctoo,' and three among the little body of Trinity friends were candidates for the University laurel. Milnes and Hallam were unsuccessful; but

Tennyson was declared the prizeman. His poem, it is said, was written at his father's instigation, and remodelled on 'The Battle of Armageddon,' a copy of verses which he had begun before going up to Cambridge. The poems were sent in in April, and the result of the competition was announced on June 6, 1829. Hallam's poem was printed at the time, and afterwards reprinted with Tennyson's in 1834 in a little volume of the *Transactions of the Union Society*, to which we shall have occasion to refer hereafter. The fame of prize poems is usually short-lived enough, but Tennyson's 'Timbuctoo' made quite a little stir. A review in *The Athenæum* of July 22, variously attributed to John Sterling and Frederick Maurice, declared, with rather extravagant eulogy, that it 'would have done honour to any man that ever wrote'; while Milnes, who afterwards quoted two lines from it as the motto for his prize essay on 'The Influence of Homer,' wrote to his father saying that it was 'equal to most parts of Milton.' All this is high praise indeed, and gave reason to Trench's fear (expressed in a letter to W. B. Donne) that 'Cambridge might materially injure Tennyson'; since 'no young man under any circumstances should believe that he *has* done anything, but should still be looking forward.'

But Tennyson had done something, in which he might, perhaps, rest some confidence. 'Timbuctoo' is quite unique as a specimen of prize poetry, which is apt to come from the author like a piece of machine-made embroidery, stiffly regular without a touch of art. At the very outset Tennyson threw

aside conventionality. Poems sent in for the Chancellor's medal were invariably written in the heroic couplet, but 'Timbuctoo' is in blank verse. It must have required some searchings of heart on the part of the examiners before they could break a custom and create a precedent. It must have needed some critical acumen, too, to have recognised in so unacademical an effort the ripening greatness of the poet. Their decision is interesting, and even remarkable.

The poem, which occupied sixteen pages in its original form, opens with a description of the writer standing on a mountain overlooking the Mediterranean. His thought recurs to the isles of fancy, the earthly paradises of the old-world wanderers—to Atalantis and Eldorado—and, as he muses, he wonders whether Africa holds any city so fair as those of the older world.

'Wide Afric, doth thy Sun
Lighten, thy hills enfold a city as fair
As those which starr'd the night o' the elder World?
Or is the rumour of thy Timbuctoo
A dream as frail as those of ancient time?'

Then suddenly a Seraph is with him, speaking:

'Thy sense is clogged with dull mortality,
Thy spirit fettered with the bond of clay:
Open thine eyes and see.'

The poet looks; and all his senses are quickened.

'I saw,'

he says,

'The smallest grain that dappled the dark Earth,
The indistinctest atom in deep air,

The Moon's white cities, and the opal width
Of her small glowing lakes, her silver heights
Unvisited with dew of vagrant cloud,
And the unsounded, undescended depth
Of her black hollows.'

Then suddenly there bursts on the vision a glory of towers:

'A wilderness of spires, and chrystal pile
Of rampart upon rampart, dome on dome,
Illimitable range of battlement
On battlement, and the imperial height
Of canopy o'ercanopied. . . .
. . . The glory of the place
Stood out a pillar'd front of burnished gold,
Interminably high, if gold it were
Or metal more ethereal, and beneath
Two doors of blending brilliance, where no gaze
Might rest, stood open, and the eye could scan
Through length of porch and valve and boundless hall
Part of a throne of fiery flame, wherefrom
The snowy skirting of a garment hung,
And glimpse of multitudes on multitudes
That minister'd around it.'

And the Seraph raises the poet as he falls, and tells him his name. He is the mighty spirit who teaches man to attain

'By shadowing forth the Unattainable'—

playing about his heart, visiting his eye with visions, haunting his ear

'With harmonies of wind and wave and wood.'

'I am the Spirit,
The permeating life which courseth through
All th' intricate and labyrinthine veins
Of the great vine of Fable.'

And with a sigh he reflects that soon he must render up this glorious home to 'Keen *Discovery*,' till the

brilliant towers shrink into huts, low-built, mud-walled, the loathly opposite of this City of Dream.

So the Seraph leaves him, and the poet is alone on Calpe

> 'And the Moon
> Had fallen from the night, and all was dark!'

The poem, suffering as it does from a certain unreality, a sense of forced art and laboured decoration, is nevertheless very remarkable as the work of a man in his twentieth year. It has a richness of imagination and a brilliance of light and colour that are almost dazzling; it shows, too, an ease and skill in handling the metre, and a sense of melody which are quite Tennysonian. Many of the lines have all the sound of his maturer verse.

> 'Blenched with faery light,
> Uncertain whether faery light or cloud.'

> 'Look into my face
> With his unutterable shining orbs.'

> 'The clear Galaxy
> Shorn of its hoary lustre, wonderful.'

> 'In accents of majestic melody.'

These lines might have fallen directly from the 'Idylls.' A tendency to weak endings—such as:

> 'Listenest the lordly music flowing from
> Th' illimitable years.'

> 'Bathes the cold head with tears, and gazeth on
> Those eyes.'

shows the immature hand; but there is very little in the poem that falls below the level of the whole. It is a well-sustained, fantastic piece of work, imaginative, æsthetic, polished—a curiously-interesting indication of the character which his later work was to

assume. Here and there is a touch of Wordsworth and a reminiscence of 'The Excursion,' but its chief interest lies in its faint prophecy of form and treatment to be.

In the scarcity of contemporary criticism it is interesting to read a letter from Christopher Wordsworth to his brother Charles, in which he speaks of the Prize Poem with very genuine enthusiasm. 'What do you think,' he wrote from Cuddesdon on September 4, 1829, 'of Tennyson's Prize Poem? If such an exercise had been sent up at Oxford, the author would have had a better chance of being rusticated—with the view of his passing a few months in a Lunatic Asylum—than of obtaining the prize. It is certainly a wonderful production; and if it had come out under Lord Byron's name, it would have been thought as fine as anything he ever wrote.' This is high praise—too high, indeed. And it is a little hard on the Oxford judges, who from time to time have not lacked the wit to appreciate the early promise of Bishop Heber, Matthew Arnold, Mr. John Ruskin, Mr. John Addington Symonds, and Sir Edwin Arnold.

Before we leave 'Timbuctoo' altogether, another incident in the history of the poem gives it interest, and demands a brief record. Thackeray, who was another contemporary of Tennyson's at Trinity, though apparently in a different set, published in a weekly periodical called *The Snob* a travesty of the prize poem of the year; and the burlesque attracted some attention from members of the college. The novelist's diary relates that at a wine-party the parody 'received much laud,' and that 'he could not help

finding out that he was very fond of this same praise.' It does not seem to be a very happy parody, however; if the praise was based on its imitative felicity, it was easily won.

> 'In Africa—a quarter of the world—
> Men's skins are black; their hair is crisped and curled;
> And somewhere there, unknown to public view,
> A mighty city lies, called Timbuctoo.'

This cannot be intended as a travesty: the story bears error upon the face of it. Thackeray's poem is not only not in the least degree like Tennyson's in matter or style, but it is written in the heroic couplet. A parodist would first of all have seized on the blank verse, the unprecedented novelty in form. It is hardly to be doubted that Thackeray's was merely a 'rejected address,' a comic effort on the theme suggested for the prize. It was most probably written before any one knew who the prizeman was, or had seen Tennyson's poem.

Meanwhile the friendship between Hallam and Tennyson was growing in fervour, and during the next year they were together at Somersby Rectory. They had determined to publish a volume of poems together, and Charles was occupied in the same field too. He had secured an academic success as well, a Bell scholarship, which was awarded him chiefly in consideration of the exquisite English into which he had translated the Greek and Latin unseen papers. The world was opening before the brothers, full of hopes and aspirations. But Frederick seems to have stood for the moment out of the tide, reserved, and a little sad. Milnes describes him as a prey to 'melancholy idleness,' withdrawing himself from society, unwilling

to compete for the Greek Ode, which his friends thought a certainty for him, altogether given over to something very like a morbid moroseness. Frederick's moodiness is the only shadow in a picture of otherwise unbroken gaiety. Stories of the time represent him as sinister in aspect, terrific in manner, even to the alarm and discomfiture of elderly dons.

Among the many interests of the Cambridge circle amateur theatricals had their place. On March 19, 1830, a performance of 'Much Ado about Nothing' found three of Tennyson's friends in leading parts. Richard Monckton Milnes played Beatrice, while John Mitchell Kemble and Arthur Hallam were respectively the Dogberry and Verges. Milnes was also stage-manager.

All this time Alfred Tennyson was continually at work upon poetry of one kind or another. In the evenings a few chosen friends would congregate in his rooms, and the young poet in his deep, half-articulate, melodious monotone would read them his latest verses. Henry Alford's Journal mentions such an occasion, when Hallam, Merivale, and others listened to the 'Hesperides.'

This poem, which was one of the chief objects of disapproval to 'The Quarterly Reviewer,' was printed in the *Poems* in 1832, but subsequently suppressed. It is full of a weird fancy, mystical, and undefined, with a tendency to allusiveness which deprives it of real power. But it is melodious, and very highly finished.

'Father Hesper, Father Hesper, watch, watch, night and day,
Lest the old wound of the world be healèd

The glory unsealèd,
The golden apple stol'n away,
And the ancient secret revealèd.
Look from west to east along:
Father, old Himala weakens, Caucasus is bold and strong.
Wandering waters unto wandering waters call;
Let them clash together, foam and fall.
Out of watchings, out of wiles
Comes the bliss of secret smiles.
All things are not told to all.
Half-round the mantling night is drawn,
Purple fringed with even and dawn.
Hesper hateth Phospher, evening hateth dawn.'

It has the sound of some chorus from a Greek drama: and one can fancy how Tennyson's deep voice trolled it out and made music of its unaccustomed metre.

Archbishop Trench, towards the end of his life, gave a vivid description of these readings to Mr. Edmund Gosse, to whose kindness the writer owes the possibility of its recapitulation here. It was an understood thing, the Archbishop said, that the listeners should remain listeners only: while they were free to hear, they were forbidden to criticise. They sat round the table, while the poet, with his face lit by the lamp, crooned out his mellifluous music. If they were pleased, it was understood that they might eventually say so; but silence must be the nearest approach to disapproval. Even as early as this, it seems, Tennyson was the victim of an exquisite sensitiveness, which was quite intolerant of direct criticism. It seemed to be like physical pain to him that his friends should find fault with his work. But an antidote to the susceptibility was found in the severe scrutiny to which he subjected every word he wrote. He was his own critic, and knew no mercy for himself.

In this way he continued writing and correcting,

but the book of poems by Tennyson and Hallam was never published. Hallam's father, the historian, did not approve of the idea; so instead of the joint volume, the author of 'Timbuctoo' appeared in print alone in a thin volume of 154 pages—called *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*—published in 1830 by Effingham Wilson. Perhaps the most interesting copy of this book still extant is that in the Dyce collection at South Kensington, which contains an inscription: 'Robert Southey, 27 July, 1830, Keswick, from James Spedding.' It would be tedious to recapitulate an entire table of the contents, but mention may perhaps be made of a few poems which subsequent issue has made familiar to us. Among the *Juvenilia* still preserved in the Laureate's collected works, 'Claribel,' 'Nothing will die,' 'All things will die,' 'The Kraken,' 'Lilian,' 'Isabel,' 'Mariana,' 'Madeline,' 'The Owl,' 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights,' 'The Ode to Memory,' 'A Character,' 'The Poet,' 'The Poet's Mind,' 'The Deserted House,' 'The Dying Swan,' 'Love and Death,' 'A Dirge,' 'Oriana,' 'Circumstance,' 'The Merman' and 'The Mermaid,' 'The Sea Fairies,' 'Adeline,' and the Sonnet to J. M. Kemble, all appeared in this volume. The song 'The Winds, as at their hour of birth,' the lines beginning 'Clear-headed friend, when joyful scorn, and 'The Sleeping Beauty,' afterwards expanded, are also among the contents of *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*.

The book met with some attention. It was criticised in *The Westminster Review* of January 1831, in a notice which, while it doubted the instant

appreciation of the poems, predicted a brilliant future for the writer. The reviewer remarked:

'That these poems will have a very rapid and extensive popularity we do not anticipate. Their very originality will prevent their being generally appreciated for a time. But that time will come, we hope, to a not far-distant end. They demonstrate the possession of powers, to the future direction of which we look with some anxiety. A genuine poet has deep responsibilities to his country and the world, to the present and future generations, to earth and heaven. He, of all men, should have distinct and worthy objects before him, and consecrate himself to their promotion. It is thus that he best consults the glory of his art, and his own lasting fame. Mr. Tennyson has a dangerous quality in that facility of impersonation on which we have remarked, and by which he enters so thoroughly into the most strange and wayward idiosyncrasies of other men. It must not degrade him into a poetical harlequin. He has higher work to do than that of disporting himself amongst "mystics" and "flowing philosophers." He knows that "the Poet's mind is holy ground"; he knows that the poet's portion is to be

> "Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love";

he has shown, in the lines from which we quote, his own just conception of the grandeur of a poet's destiny; and we look to him for its fulfilment. It is not for such men to sink into mere verse-makers for the amusement of themselves or others. They can influence the associations of unnumbered hearts; they can disseminate principles; they can give those principles power over men's imaginations; they can excite in a good cause the sustained enthusiasm that is sure to conquer; they can blast the laurels of the tyrants, and hallow the memories of the martyrs of patriotism; they can act with a force, the extent of which it is difficult to estimate, upon national feelings and character, and consequently upon

national happiness. If our estimate of Mr. Tennyson be correct, he too is a poet, and many years hence may he read his juvenile description of that character with the proud consciousness that it has become the description and history of his own work.'

This notice gave great satisfaction to Tennyson's friends. 'Have you seen the review of A. T.'s poems in the *Westminster*,' wrote Monteith to Milnes. 'It is really enthusiastic. If we can get him well reviewed in the *Edinburgh* it will do.'

Samuel Taylor Coleridge also admired, but with reservation. He was overpowered by the brilliance and wealth of the metre: he had never heard such music before. He could not measure it.

'I have not,' he wrote, 'read through all Mr. Tennyson's poems which have been sent me, but I think there are some things of a good deal of beauty in that I have seen. The misfortune is, that he has begun to write verses without very well understanding what metre is. Even if you write in a known and approved metre, the odds are, if you are not a metrist yourself, that you will not write harmonious verses; but to deal in new metres without considering what metre means and requires, is preposterous. What I would, with many wishes of success, prescribe to Tennyson—indeed without it he can never be a poet in art—is to write for the next two or three years in none but one or two well-known and strictly-defined metres; such as the heroic couplet, the octave stanza, or the octosyllabic measure of the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. He would probably thus get imbued with a sensation, if not a sense of metre, without knowing it, just as Eton boys get to write such good Latin verses by conning Ovid and Tibullus. As it is, I can scarcely scan his verses.'

This was the difficulty with so many of Tennyson's

critics. His work was so bold, his melody so fluent, that they could not understand him. But his friends knew him better. In August of the same year Arthur Hallam contributed a paper to *The Englishman's Magazine*, 'On some Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson,' full of the praises of his friend. 'The features of original genius,' he said, 'are clearly and strongly marked. The author imitates nobody.'

Five excellences in especial attracted Hallam towards his friend's work. 'First, his luxuriance of imagination, and at the same time, his control over it. Secondly, his power of embodying himself in ideal characters, or rather moods of character, with such extreme accuracy of adjustment that the circumstances of the narrative seem to have a natural correspondence with the predominant feeling, and, as it were, to be evolved from it by assimilative force. Thirdly, his vivid, picturesque delineation of objects, and the peculiar skill with which he holds all of them *fused*, to borrow a metaphor from science, in a medium of strong emotion. Fourthly, the variety of his lyrical measures, and exquisite modulation of harmonious words and cadences to the swell and fall of the feelings expressed. Fifthly, the elevated habit of his thought, *implied* in these compositions, and imparting a mellow soberness of tone, more impressive, to our minds, than if the author had drawn up a set of opinions in verse, and sought to instruct the understanding rather than to communicate the love of beauty to the heart.'

Friends are naturally carried away into superla-

tives; but the poems had undoubted power. They had more; they argued originality. They were full of that appreciation of nature which had been born again, after an age of conventional poetry, in the work of Wordsworth, while they combined with his sympathy with the countryside a richness and variety of melody, which may have been due to the influence of Shelley and Keats, for whom Alfred Tennyson had at the time a special affection. At the same time there was an originality of treatment, an individuality of feeling, about them which justified Hallam's verdict —'the author imitates nobody.' The portraits of feminine character, delicate miniatures, as it were, painted on ivory, have a fresh charm and melody which has rendered them a permanent addition to our literature. 'Airy, fairy Lilian,' 'Ever-varying Madeline,' 'Revered Isabel, the crown and head, the stately flower of female fortitude,' 'Shadowy, dreaming Adeline';—they are a perfect picture-gallery in themselves. One might well add Mariana, too, drawing her casement-curtain to glance athwart the gloomy flats, with the eternal sigh: 'He cometh not.' This was all something new to poetry, something human and direct, with a touch of its own that claimed attention. 'The Ballad of Oriana' must also be ranked as one of the wildest and most pathetic of his poems. He has never surpassed the tender yearning of the metre. 'When Norland winds pipe down the sea' is a splendid line, full of the sweep and melancholy of the storm. . . .

Several of the pieces have not been reprinted. Among those suppressed, at least for a time, are two

rather involved efforts at mental analysis, dealing with the struggle of doubt and faith—'Supposed confessions of a second-rate sensitive mind not in unity with itself,' and 'The How and the Why.' The latter poem has some strange lines which suggest the germ of 'The Higher Pantheism.' The spirit and its treatment are very like.

'The bulrush nods unto its brother:
What is it they say? What do they here?
Why two and two make four? Why round is not square?
Why the rock stands still, and the light clouds fly?
Why the heavy oak groans, and the white willows sigh?
Why deep is not high, and high is not deep?
Whether we wake, or whether we sleep?
Whether we sleep, or whether we die?
How you are you? Why I am I?
Who will riddle me the *how* and the *why*?'

The other poem is stronger, and has the advantage of a metre better adapted to the thought. Tennyson prevented its republication by *The Christian Signal*; but during the last ten years his view has been changed, and the poem has been finally included in his collected works.

'Ay me! I fear
All may not doubt, but everywhere
Some must clasp Idols. Yet, my God,
Whom call I Idol? Let Thy dove
Shadow me over, and my sins
Be unremembered, and Thy love
Enlighten me. Oh, teach me yet
Somewhat before the heavy clod
Weighs on me, and the busy fret
Of that sharp-headed worm begins
In the gross blackness underneath.

O weary life! O weary death!
O spirit and heart made desolate!
O damned vacillating state!'

'Dualisms,' also suppressed, is playfully alluded

to in a correspondence between Wordsworth and Claughton, Bishop of St. Albans. The latter wrote, in January 1834, 'While you have been reading Rose (Hugh Rose's University Sermons) to Cantelupe, I have been doing the same here. These coincidences are what Tennyson calls "dualisms."'

The poem, however, is rather melodious than metaphysical.

'Where in a creeping cove the wave unshocked
Lays itself calm and wide,
Over a stream two birds of glancing feather
Do woo each other, carolling together;
Both alike they glide together,
Side by side
Both alike they sing together,
Arching blue-glossed necks beneath the purple weather.'

Another little piece, since omitted from his works sounds like an echo from the Elizabethan poets. It is called 'The Burial of Love,' and is rather artificial.

'Love is dead:
His last arrow is sped;
He hath not another dart;
Go, carry him to his dark death-bed;
Bury him in the cold, cold heart—
Love is dead.'

More in the Tennysonian spirit, with the life and fire of 'Fatima,' but with a startlingly clear echo of Shelley, is 'Hero and Leander,' a very passionate outburst of love in this strain:

'Oh, go not yet, my love,
The night is dark and vast;
The white moon is hid in her heaven above,
And the waves climb high and fast.
Oh! kiss me, kiss me, once again,
Lest thy kiss should be the last.
Oh kiss me ere we part;
Grow closer to my heart.
My heart is warmer surely than the bosom of the main.

O joy! O bliss of blisses!
My heart of hearts art thou.
Come bathe me with thy kisses,
My eyelids and my brow,
Hark how the wild rain hisses,
And the loud sea roars below.'

The other suppressed poems were less worthy—one 'A National Song,' inspired by Campbell and Allan Cunningham, was perhaps scarcely worth printing, though, in an altered form, it reappeared sixty-two years later in 'The Foresters,' where (such is the forgetfulness of critics) it was reviewed as an entirely new lyric. But the blemishes on the book were very few, and the beauties were undeniable.

Small wonder that Tennyson's friends were full of enthusiasm. 'Truly one of the great of the earth,' said Blakesley of the poet. 'In Alfred's mind the materials of the greatest work are heaped in an abundance which is almost confusion,' said John Kemble. And yet again, Arthur Hallam, standing in the Somersby garden, said to Tennyson, 'Fifty years hence, people will make pilgrimages to this place.' The promise on which the friends based their praise has not been belied by the performance.

At the time, however, the young poet was not to be left to the admiration of his friends, without some critic to question his promise. In May 1832, Professor Wilson, under the pseudonym of 'Christopher North,' wrote for *Blackwood's Magazine* a violent attack upon Tennyson and his little band of followers. *The Englishman's Magazine* had come to an untimely end, and this afforded the critic an opportunity for his cynicism. It was the essay on

'The Genius of Alfred Tennyson,' he declared, which sent the periodical to its grave; for the essay was distinguished by a 'supernatural pomposity' which 'incapacitated the whole work for living one day longer in this unceremonious world.' People, he added, were not yet prepared to set Alfred Tennyson 'among the stars'; but 'if he had not some genius, he would scarcely have survived the critique.' So 'Christopher North': and to Tennyson's sensitive temperament the attack must have been a cruel one.

Indeed, in his next volume of poems, published at the end of the same year, he included a little polemic in verse, retorting upon 'musty, rusty, fusty' Christopher, in language that shows that the sting of the critic struck deep. The critique, says Tennyson, mingled blame and praise: but praise was intolerable from North.

> 'When I learnt from whom it came,
> I forgave you all the blame,
> Musty Christopher;
> I could *not* forgive the praise,
> Fusty Christopher.'

Second thoughts, and a nature that hates 'the spites and the follies' have erased these lines from later collections of his poetry.

But before reviews had appeared and the fame of the book had been noised abroad, much had been happening in Tennyson's life to draw him even nearer to Arthur Hallam. During the summer of 1830, the two friends made an exciting journey to the Pyrenees. The tyranny of Ferdinand of Spain had been answered by the voice of conspiracy, and the War of Spanish Independence was at its height.

Trench and Sterling, Tennyson and Hallam, were all much interested by the struggle, and the two last named actually made an expedition to the relief of the rebels, carrying with them some money and letters written in invisible ink. 'And a wild bustling time we had of it,' said Hallam. 'I played my part as conspirator in a small way, and made friends with two or three gallant men who have since been trying their luck with Valdes.'

This must have been an experience calculated to knit the friends very firmly to one another, and within a few months of their return Alfred Tennyson had to face a trouble which naturally threw him even more than before upon the sympathy of his friends. In the March of the following year 'one went who never hath returned'; and the death of his father fell upon Tennyson as no common loss. Himself deeply interested in literature and art, the father must have sympathised keenly with his son's early successes, and in missing his genial advice and encouragement, the poet missed much that would have lent a brighter colour to his after progress.

'He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is seen
Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been.'

After his father's death, Alfred Tennyson left Cambridge, without taking his degree. The Somersby home was not, however, immediately broken up: Mrs. Tennyson remained in the rectory until 1837, the duty being taken by Mr. E. A. Robinson, a curate. Hallam's sympathy with Tennyson's loss must have

been the more heartfelt, since before this time he had begun to feel an affection for the poet's sister Emily. Indeed, during 1831 the affection developed into something stronger, and ripened into a private engagement—kept secret at the wish of Hallam's father, until Arthur should come of age. During that time it was agreed that the young people should not meet, and Hallam went back to Cambridge. It was at this time that he won a prize for declamation. His subject was 'The Conduct of the Independent Party during the Civil War'; and, in consequence of this success, he had to deliver a speech in the chapel upon 'The Influence of Italian upon English Literature.'

Meanwhile Charles Tennyson had published a volume of sonnets, which appeared about the same time as *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*. These poems Trench compared to Keats, while Kemble declared them 'superb'; and the two brothers were reviewed together by Leigh Hunt in *The Tatler*, his notice of them extending from Thursday, February 23rd, to Thursday, March 30th. The consideration ended in the critic's decision that Alfred was the more promising poet of the two. Alfred contributed also some three or four poems during the year to periodicals: 'No More,' 'Anacreontics,' and 'A Fragment' appearing in *The Gem*, and a sonnet beginning 'Check every outflash, every ruder sally' in *The English Magazine* for August. These poems were not reprinted, though they were quite worthy of preservation.

It is natural that, in the course of time, much of

his earlier work should seem to its author to demand rejection: but the final choice is best determined by the question of the place filled by the poems in the gradual progress of development. Does this or that poem represent an influence, typify a period? Then it should be retained. Each of the short pieces under discussion has interest as an example of a phase of the poet's thought. Each is an example of a different course in his progress. They might, therefore, with justice find their place in the collected edition of his work.

The Gem for 1831, in which Tennyson's three poems appeared, was further enriched by contributions from W. M. Praed, Bernard Barton, the Hon. Mrs. Norton, Mary Howitt, Sir Aubrey de Vere, and Miss Mitford. The first of Tennyson's pieces, 'No More,' has much in common with his later songs. It is picturesque, dreamy, melancholy.

> 'Oh sad *No More!* Oh sweet *No More!*
> Oh strange *No More!*'

he sighs, and the sight and scent of the wild-weed flowers remind him, as the harvest-fields and the breaking wave among the rocks were to remind him anew, of hopes lost and loves remembered. The drowsy melancholy of nature enthrals him, and draws him into sorrow.

> 'Surely all pleasant things had gone before,
> Low buried fathom-deep beneath with thee, NO MORE!'

In the 'Anacreontics,' which are richer in colour than in thought, there is an echo of the full, deep-mouthed music which rolled through 'Claribel.' And

there is the same thinness of motive. A dozen lines are used to describe a garland of

> 'roses musky breathed
> And drooping daffodilly,
> And silver-leaved lily,
> And ivy darkly wreathed,'

with which the poet crowns his Lenora, winning her love by his gift. The workmanship is too elaborate for the picture: the impression produced is but slight.

The 'Fragment' of thirty-one lines is a veritable fragment, a description of Eastern scenery, vivid, but not very suggestive. An extract will recall the tone and touch of 'Timbuctoo,' of which it was probably a rejected passage.

> 'Where,
> Mysterious Egypt, are thine obelisks,
> Graven with gorgeous emblems undiscerned?
> Thy placid Sphinxes brooding o'er the Nile?
> Thy shadowy Idols in the solitudes,
> Awful Memnonian countenances calm,
> Looking athwart the burning flats, far off
> Seen by the high-necked camel on the verge,
> Journeying southward.'

There remains the sonnet printed in *The Englishman's Magazine* for August 1831, the number that included Hallam's paper on Tennyson's verses. It lacks the completeness and the centred thought of a perfect sonnet, but it is richly decorated with brilliant words. The second and third lines, too, have interest from their subsequent connection with 'The Lotos Eaters.'

> 'Check every outflash, every ruder sally,
> Of thought and speech: speak low, and give up wholly
> The spirit to mild-minded Melancholy:
> This is the place.'

And the rest of the sonnet describes a valley, with its 'blue-green river' winding through it, with the cry of the nightingale in the larches, and the sleeping pine-wood above,—a valley of enchantment in the poet's eyes, since here he first told his love. This is not the matter for a sonnet, nor has Tennyson often succeeded in throwing into the limit of fourteen lines the high seriousness and completeness of thought through which alone a sonnet can attain perfection. It is the form in which he is least a master.

To turn for a moment from the work to the man: a picture of the poet as he was at this time, sketched by the best pen able to draw him, appears in a letter of Arthur Hallam's, dated March 20, 1832. 'His nervous temperament,' he says, 'and habits of solitude give an appearance of affectation to his manner, which is no true interpretation of the man, and wears off on further knowledge. . . . I think you would hardly fail to see much for love, as well as for admiration.' It was always so with Alfred Tennyson. The keenest shyness is ever apt to issue in a sort of mannerism, which to the casual eye appears affectation. A fuller friendship breaks down the reserve and pierces to the heart of the man itself.

In the same year Hallam took his degree and left Cambridge for London, where his name was entered at the Inner Temple. But before he went up to town the summer was spent at Somersby. His year of probation was over. He was now of age; and the engagement to Tennyson's sister was generally acknowledged. 'I am now at Somersby,' he wrote to R. C. Trench, 'not only as the friend of Alfred

Tennyson, but as the lover of his sister. An attachment on my part of near two years' standing, and an engagement of one year's are, I hope, only the commencement of an union which circumstances may not impair, and the grave itself not conclude.' The letter, which is one of those confidences almost too sacred for publication, speaks with the most delicate feeling and the soundest sense of his father's earlier prohibition, and of the comfort and new life given him in the realisation of his love.

The sonnet published in the 'Remains,' which opens: 'Lady, I bid thee to a sunny dome,' was written to her: and the brother's memory of this time finds voice in one of the most beautiful passages in 'In Memoriam.' There we see Arthur Hallam, now mixing in all the 'simple sports,' now reading 'the Tuscan poets on the lawn.'

'Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon.'

It was so that Arthur Hallam himself remembered her.

'Sometimes I dream thee leaning o'er
The harp I used to love so well;
Again I tremble and adore
The soul of its delicious swell;
Again the very air is dim
With eddies of harmonious might,
And all my brain and senses swim
In a keen madness of delight.'

Or again, it might be a picnic in the woods that formed the day's entertainment, brightened by discussions on books and politics, or a debate on the pleasures and drawbacks of town and country life.

And Arthur was all for the country, full of the beauty of

> 'The woodbine veil,
> The milk that bubbled in the pail,
> And buzzings of the honeyed hours.'

And when the evening fell, the little circle lingered on the lawn, and the sound of the brook came to them across the evening mist, and the bats wheeled round under the trees, while the party sang old songs till it grew late,

> 'And in the house light after light
> Went out.'

Tennyson, describing this evening scene of years afterwards, when Hallam was lost to him, tells us how vividly it brought back to him the glad year when they were together; so that, when the rest were gone to bed, the poet was left in a trance, which dreamed on the likeness and yet unlikeness of the two nights. The scene remained the same, but the light was gone out from it: nothing but the memory remained.

So these days at Somersby become a time to linger fondly over,—a fresh, green glade, as it were, in the wilderness of life; a rest and consolation by the way.

CHAPTER III

LITERARY TROUBLES AND ARTHUR HALLAM'S DEATH

In October 1832 Arthur Hallam went up to London, working with a Mr. Walters, a conveyancer in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and living at 67 Wimpole Street, the dark house in the 'long, unlovely street.' His little joke on the address—'You will always find me at sixes and sevens'—is well known. During the summer he had again applied himself to literary work, with a rejoinder to Rossetti's 'Disquisizioni Sullo Spirito Antipapale,' in which he combated the theory that Dante and Petrarch had merely invented their characters for the sake of veiling an attack upon the current religious tenets of the day. From the date of his going to London, however, the duller work of life claimed him, the 'brawling courts and dusty purlieus of the law.' While he was at work in his office, Alfred Tennyson was busy preparing a new volume for the press, and contributed two sonnets to *The Yorkshire Literary Annual*, and *Friendship's Offering* respectively. Towards the end of the year the new volume appeared, a volume a little larger than *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, since it amounted to some 163 pages. It was published by Edward Moxon. A

copy of this book, preserved in the Dyce collection at South Kensington, contains on the fly-leaf, written in pencil, an irregular sonnet, which reads like a very boyish depreciation of Cambridge and its tuition. It is best forgotten.

Many of the pieces are among his best-known works; but of the thirty poems which composed the volume, a dozen have since been cancelled. 'The Lady of Shalott,' 'Mariana in the South,' 'Eleanore,' 'The Miller's Daughter,' interesting from its association with Granchester Mill, 'Œnone,' inspired by the visit of Hallam and the poet to the Pyrenees, 'The Sisters,' 'The Palace of Art,' 'The May Queen,' 'New Year's Eve,' 'The Lotos Eaters,' and 'A Dream of Fair Women,' are the best reputed poems in the volume, while 'Fatima,' 'Margaret,' the sonnet to Poland, 'The Death of the Old Year,' and the lines to 'J. S.' have also been preserved in later editions. The book was in every way an advance on the 1830 volume. The lyrical melody and flow, which permeated 'Oriana' and the portraits, had grown even richer in 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'The Lotos Eaters'; and, while the music and inspiration of the verse had deepened, the poet's mind had, in its growth, drawn to itself stronger and more permanent subjects, and treated them with a firmer and more dramatic touch. It is interesting to note how early the mind, searching for scenes and characters akin to its temperament, lighted upon the Arthurian legend and took it to itself. 'The Lady of Shalott' is one of the earliest signs of an inclination which had not yet crystallised into performance.

It is, moreover, an excellent example of the perfection with which Tennyson catches every detail in the phase of nature which he is picturing. The early part of the poem is a sequence of pictures, reflected in the mirror with a vivid exactitude. The long fields of barley, the island among its lily-beds, the stretch of the river with the wind sweeping across it, where

'Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver'—

all these are views, lovingly touched in by the sympathetic hand of an artist. And when movement enters the poem, a sharp stroke breaks the reflection, and hurries us out into life.

'Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side.'

The second half of the poem is alive with the flow of the river; it sweeps along to the sound of the ripple.

'Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And, as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.'

This is a double view of nature; its picturesque and vital elements are contrasted with a swift discrimination. In 'The Lotos Eaters' we get a still more vivid appreciation of the influence of nature upon the senses. This poem breathes the very essence of the complete self-abandonment of a sensuous temperament to the dreamy charm of summer

scenery. All memory of the outer world is lost in the ecstasy of the moment. The life of work seems most weary, and one of the band of dreamers finds voice for the thought that the others have scarcely the energy to utter: 'We will return no more! . . . . Why should life all labour be?' To the spirit stagnant in the charm of the Lotos-land there seems no true happiness, save the idle carelessness of the Gods, at ease beside their nectar,

'Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.'

It is the very apotheosis of sensuous enjoyment.

This was something new to literature. The formal, restrained poetry of Wordsworth had wedded itself to the melody and colour of Keats and Shelley and the vigour of Byron, and the result was Tennyson. Keats had not more colour, nor Shelley more music. Wordsworth's skill in reading nature's secrets combined in Tennyson with a delicacy and refinement of observation which turned every scene he touched into a little masterpiece. Words cannot evoke a deeper colour than the tints of such scenery as the following:

'It was the deep midnoon: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came.
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With branch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.'

And again, the drowsy, motionless luxury of a summer afternoon never found a voice to equal this:

'How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-eyed melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!'

This was no boy-poet, playing with his girl-companions down the garden-paths, laughing with Lilian, changing with Madeline's caprices, or wondering over the unfathomed depths in Adeline's eyes. This was a man who looked at nature with a man's clear gaze, and felt it with a man's strong passion. His poetry was the voice of a sensitive, nervous mind, quivering in sympathy with nature.

The strength of the passion in 'Fatima' proved that Tennyson had passed out of his boyhood; there are few lines more eloquent of love, even in Swinburne.

'O Love, O fire! once he drew
With one long kiss my whole soul thro'
My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

. . . . .

I will grow round him in his place,
Grow, live, die looking on his face,
Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace.'

But it was not as an artist and a lover alone that Tennyson claimed attention; he showed himself a thinker as well. 'The Palace of Art,' opening with

a characteristically luxurious description of the 'lordly pleasure-house' which the poet built his soul, proceeded through a keen process of mental analysis to sift the discomfort with which the glorious home infected his spirit. This was the cry of a mind that had suffered, and through suffering had overcome. It was an allegory, too, of the poet's own course of thought. His lordly palace of art had no charm for his soul:

> 'So when four years were wholly finishèd,
> She threw her royal robes away.
> "Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
> "Where I may mourn and pray."'

It is not till after this communing with nature in her secresy that the soul will be fit to live among the shining treasures of art.

These two elements, the artistic and the intellectual, unite in his sketches of life and character, which showed already a certain dramatic power, and a skill in fixing on the distinctive features of the subject. Here is a finished little sketch of *genre*:

> 'I see the wealthy miller yet,
> His double chin, his portly size,
> And who that knew him could forget
> The busy wrinkles round his eyes?
> The slow, wise smile, that round about
> His dusty forehead drily curl'd,
> Seem'd half-within and half-without,
> And full of dealings with the world?'

There is a fineness of touch in the portrait which was denied to the early impressionist pictures of girl-life; a familiarity with the medium gives the poet a confidence in his own power. He ceases to generalise mistily; and strikes the living picture down upon the

page. The rather artificial setting in 'A Dream of Fair Women' is almost obliterated by the brilliance of the gems it encloses. We get a true touch of dramatic power in such a speech as this:

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit
Lamps which out-burn'd Canopus. O my life
In Egypt! O the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailèd Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die!'

Or again:

'"Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth." Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.'

The poet loses himself in his character; and nowhere does he lose himself more completely than in 'The May Queen,' a poem which is simple without triviality, while the chastened pathos of the sentiment is as full of dramatic energy as it is free from rhetorical posture.

These were the principal riches of the volume; there are other poems interesting from their subsequent suppression, and others, again, from their association.

Among the latter are the lines to Christopher North, already quoted, and the little piece, 'Darling Room,' satirically alluded to in Bulwer Lytton's subsequent attack on Tennyson. This last poem, rather an inconsequential effort, describes the study in which the poet preferred to work. There are a tendency

to gush, and a weakness in touch, which gave an opportunity to Tennyson's reviewer.

> 'O darling room, my heart's delight,
> Dear room, the apple of my sight;
> With thy two couches, soft and white,
> There is no room so exquisite;
> No little room so warm and bright,
> Wherein to read, wherein to write.'

The critic treated the sentiment captiously; but there was room for a reprimand. This is how *The Quarterly Review* proceeded: 'We entreat our readers to note how, even in this little trifle, the singular taste and genius of Mr. Tennyson break forth. In such a dear little room a narrow-minded scribbler would have been content with one sofa, and that one he would probably have covered with black mohair or red cloth, or a good striped chintz; how infinitely more characteristic is white dimity!—'tis, as it were, a type of the purity of the poet's mind.'

This is a *badinage* which overleaps itself and falls on the other side. But the poem was not worthy of the poet: it is the finical work of a *dilettante*, suggesting a mind busied with little things—a mind, in short, inferior to Tennyson's. It is well omitted.

There are two poems, however, the omission of which may be regretted: two additions to the portrait-gallery of maidenhood—'Rosalind' and 'Kate.' There was room for each of these types, and each is treated with Tennyson's full felicity. It needs but a brief extract to prove their excellence. 'Rosalind,' suppressed for many years, but finally revived, is delightful. 'Kate' has never been deemed worthy of restoration:

'My Rosalind, my Rosalind,
My frolic falcon, with bright eyes,
Whose keen delight, from any height of rapid flight,
Stoops at all game that wing the skies.
My Rosalind, my Rosalind,
My bright-eyed, wild-eyed falcon, whither,
Careless both of wind and weather,
Whither fly ye, what game spy ye,
Up or down the streaming wind?'

This is a very spirited portrait of a spirited girl, untamed, untamable. And then the contrast,—the Kate of his consolation and his strength,—passionate and true:

'I know her by her angry air,
Her bright-black eyes, her bright-black hair,
Her rapid laughters wild and shrill,
As laughters of the woodpecker
From the bosom of a hill.
'Tis Kate—she sayeth what she will:
For Kate hath an unbridled tongue,
Clear as the twanging of a harp.
Her heart is like a throbbing star.
Kate hath a spirit ever strung
Like a new bow, and bright, and sharp
As edges of the scymetar.
Whence shall she take a fitting mate?
For Kate no common love will feel;
My woman-soldier, gallant Kate,
As pure and true as blades of steel.'

These were worthy of a continued and permanent place in his picture-gallery; but the poet was his own keenest critic.

Such were the riches of the little ship that came ashore to an inhospitable country. There was every evidence of wealth and power. There were variety of subject, variety of treatment, variety of melody; there were a sense of beauty, a depth of passion, and a keen analytical insight into man and nature. There

was, moreover, a new note in literature. The natural poetry of the preceding period had been, in fact, artificial; its simplicity had been studied, its ease was affectation. Tennyson was to free literature from these shackles, to soar above convention into the clear, unclouded atmosphere of nature. He was a new influence, a new genius, a new power. *The Quarterly Review* thought otherwise. In a strain of bombastic praise it hailed another star in 'that milky-way of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger': 'the lamented Keats,' in whose case the great literary journal had already sufficiently stultified itself. The reviewer found Tennyson's sympathy with nature ludicrous; and reviled 'Œnone' altogether, since he found the same line repeated no fewer than sixteen times. The tone of the criticism may be best judged by a short extract, which is characteristic of the reviewer's taste. He quotes and comments in this manner:

'"Then let wise Nature work her will,
And on my clay her darnels grow,
Come only when the days are still,
And at my headstone whisper low,
And tell me——"

Now, what would the ordinary bard wish to be told under such circumstances? Why, perhaps, how his sweetheart was, or his child, or his family, or how the Reform Bill worked, or whether the last edition of his poems had sold?—*papae!* our genuine poet's first wish is:

"And tell me—*if the woodbines blow.*"'

It was not a very critical estimate for a great review.

Nor was *Blackwood's Magazine* much calmer. It found Tennyson hampered by a 'puerile partiality for particular forms of expression,' and 'self-willed and perverse in his infantile vanity.' These were bitter attacks; and they wounded Tennyson to the quick. 'The Lover's Tale' was in the press at the time, and the poet was so nervously sensitive to its shortcomings that he immediately withdrew it. But a few copies, as we have mentioned before, survived in proof among the collections of his personal friends. At that time the first two parts alone were written, and it was not till 1869 that 'The Golden Supper' was printed, without the preludes, in the volume which included 'The Holy Grail.' Ten years later the work was issued in its entirety. Without the conclusion, the story lacks motive and progress; and the poem is best considered in its perfect form, which has the additional advantage of being the shape which the author ultimately approved.

A bare outline of the story requires few words. Julian, the narrator, has been brought up with his cousin and foster-sister Camilla, for whom he conceives a passionate love. His worship of her is silent, however: he never tells his passion.

> 'I did not speak: I could not speak my love.
> Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-depths.'

But he feeds his life on hopes, which are cruelly shattered one summer morning when, unconscious of his thought of her, Camilla tells him of her love for his friend Lionel. Julian's heart is broken, and he wastes his life in moody solitude. He is haunted by

visions of her death; his fancy sees her funeral, and again, her wedding. Then, as he approaches the real event of the story, he breaks off overwhelmed by emotion, and in 'The Golden Supper' the narrative is taken up by a friend. Camilla married Lionel, and died within the year. They buried her in an open coffin in the family vault, whither, like Romeo, Julian stole to look upon her, and kiss her in death. And, as he holds her to him, he feels her heart beat beneath his hand: she is alive. In secret haste he carries her to his house, where she returns to life, and immediately afterwards her child is born. Then Julian lives 'his golden hour of triumph.' He bids Lionel to a feast; and sets his best before him. At the end, citing an Eastern custom which shows the honoured guest the richest treasures of his entertainer, he brings Camilla into the hall. She is re-united to Lionel, and Julian, conscious of having crowned his love with magnanimity, rushes from the spectacle of their happiness.

> 'It is over: let us go—
> There were our horses ready at the doors—
> We bade them no farewell, but mounting these
> He past for ever from his native land;
> And I' (says the narrator) 'with him.'

The poem, in its complete shape, is an admirable indication of the development of Tennyson's style. The first two parts—those, that is, which were finished in 1833—are markedly different from the conclusion. The whole of the early part of the poem is adorned and elaborated even beyond the author's wont. It is a study of the moods and impulses of the lover, but the dramatic progress of the work is continually impeded

by masses of imagery and long passages of description. The mind wantons in the luxury of the scene, calls up every detail of the picture, and dwells lovingly on the aspect of the hillside and the lake beside which Camilla and Julian wandered. . . .

> 'We trod the shadow of the downward hill;
> We past from light to dark. On the other side
> Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,
> Which none have fathom'd . . .
> . . . The cavern mouth,
> Half overtrailed with a wanton weed,
> Gives birth to a brawling brook, that passing lightly
> Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,
> Is presently received in a sweet grave
> Of eglantines, a place of burial
> Far lovelier than its cradle; for unseen,
> But taken with the sweetness of the place,
> It makes a constant bubbling melody
> That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower down
> Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding, leaves
> Low banks of yellow sand; and from the woods
> That belt it rise three dark, tall cypresses,—
> Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,
> That men plant over graves.'

The voluptuous affection for nature, the warm, overloaded phraseology, and the long-drawn eloquence of melancholy passion are indisputable signs of an early study of Shelley. The influence was transitory, and its trace is almost obliterated. It remains clear, however, in the first part of 'The Lover's Tale.' When the poem appeared in its entirety in 1879, Mr. Edmund Gosse, reviewing it in *The Academy*, set an instant finger on the pulse of the work. 'Especially interesting,' he said, 'is the proof that this poem gives of the mastery held over the style of Tennyson at that moment by Shelley, a mastery that would have left little or no mark in literature but for this poem, in the

first part of which the recent reading of "Episychidion" has frequently seduced the young poet aside from his own more characteristic language. This influence was soon to fade before the much more powerful one of Keats, the one poet antecedent to Tennyson, to whom the latter has at any time stood directly in the relation of a disciple. But there is yet but very little of Keats in the music or imagery of "The Lover's Tale."''

With 'The Golden Supper' there comes a change. The treatment is more dramatic, the grasp on the subject more confident. Event follows event with spirited rapidity: the narrative is keen, concise, eager. The pictures are not less vivid, but they are sketched with bolder, clearer touches.

> 'He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,
> And making there a sudden light, beheld
> All round about him that which all will be.
> The light was but a flash, and went again.
> Then at the far end of the vault he saw
> His lady with the moonlight on her face;
> Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars
> Of black and bands of silver, which the moon
> Struck from an open grating overhead
> High in the wall, and all the rest of her
> Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the vault.'

Every word gives colour, and the whole picture is wrought in with masterly rapidity.

It was well, perhaps, that 'The Lover's Tale' was detained for its vigorous conclusion; but its suppression at the time must have been a pain to Tennyson and a disappointment to his friends. The article in *The Quarterly Review* was cruel enough to discourage a young writer; but its inclination to

carp, and its occasional hypercriticism, might have deprived it, one feels, of some of the weight it carried. The rebuke was not without its use, however. Trench's fear lest the young poet should be spoiled by admiration was rendered groundless. He felt the rebuff very keenly; and, when next he appeared with a volume of poems, it was to take the world by storm. The ten years' silence, caused to no small degree by the virulence of *The Quarterly Review*, was a period of seed-time and harvest, which was to bring his power into something like full maturity.

In March 1833 Tennyson was in town with his sister,—not the one to whom Hallam was engaged,—studying the Elgin Marbles. During his visit to London he must have been with Arthur Hallam, who was still at work, but ailing. He had never been strong; and during his first year at Cambridge the symptoms of a delicate constitution had become more threatening. A rapid determination of blood to the brain, his father tells us, continually deprived him of physical power. During the spring of 1833 he was attacked by influenza, and his recovery was so slow that his parents decided to take him abroad. In August they left for Germany. Here, travelling on a wet day between Vienna and Pesth, he developed an intermittent fever, of which he died upon the fifteenth of September 1833. His remains were brought back to England, and buried at Clevedon on the 3rd of January in the following year, in the church which belonged to his mother's father, Sir Abraham Elton.

The tablet that preserves the memory, which is

more lastingly written in 'In Memoriam,' bears the following inscription :—

IN MEMORY OF
ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM,
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, B.A.
ELDEST SON OF HENRY HALLAM, ESQ.,
AND OF JULIA MARIA, HIS WIFE,
DAUGHTER OF SIR ABRAHAM ELTON, BART.,
OF CLEVEDON COURT,
WHO WAS SNATCHED AWAY BY SUDDEN DEATH
AT VIENNA, ON SEPT. 15, 1833,
IN THE 23RD YEAR OF HIS AGE.
AND NOW IN THIS OBSCURE AND SOLITARY CHURCH,
REPOSE THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
ONE TOO EARLY LOST FOR PUBLIC FAME,
BUT ALREADY CONSPICUOUS AMONG HIS
CONTEMPORARIES
FOR THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GENIUS,
THE DEPTH OF HIS UNDERSTANDING,
THE NOBLENESS OF HIS DISPOSITION,
THE FERVOUR OF HIS PIETY,
AND THE PURITY OF HIS LIFE.

Vale, dulcissime,
vale dilectissime, desideratissime,
requiescas in pace.
Pater ac Mater hic posthac requiescamus tecum
usque ad tubam.

His death fell as a terrible blow upon Alfred Tennyson and his sister. Francis Garden, writing to Trench, describes the Tennyson family as 'plunged

in the deepest affliction.' The mutual love of the two friends was a singularly beautiful one, and the separation was a loss such as can come but once or twice in a lifetime. Other loves and other interests were to succeed: but this first passionate love never lost its hold upon the poet's heart, and at the moment



CLEVEDON CHURCH.

Alfred Tennyson was too much overwhelmed to work. Even poetry failed to charm him from his sorrow. It was not till many years afterwards that his grief was to find voice in one of the most refined and most keenly analytic poems in the language, a poem which may well be set side by side with Milton's 'Lycidas,' and that 'Adonais' which Arthur

Hallam himself first introduced to English readers. The grief was then softened by resignation, and hallowed by the purity of faith.

'Forgive,' he could say—

> 'Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
> Confusions of a wasted youth;
> Forgive them where they fail in truth,
> And in thy wisdom make me wise.'

CHAPTER IV

EARLY YEARS IN LONDON

AFTER Hallam's death Tennyson came to live in London, and to apply himself to literary work. The years that follow partake of that silent development which, while its worth is proved in after years, is wont to be monotonously unattractive at the time. The severe criticism vented upon the *Poems* of 1832 threw the writer back upon himself even more intimately than before; and the keenness in judging his own work, which had marked his Cambridge days, rendered him peculiarly diffident of further publication. For nearly ten years no book from his pen was given to the general public. In 1834 the Cambridge Union issued a small volume of *Transactions*, which seems, as it were, the last cord to bind the old associations together. In this pamphlet was included the 'Adonais' of Shelley, which Arthur Hallam had brought to England from Italy. The poem had been originally printed at Pisa under the care of Lord Byron, and this Cambridge reprint was practically its introduction into English literature. The volume, besides this greater gem, contained some verses by Charles Tennyson on the expedition of Napoleon Buonaparte

to Russia, and the two poems by Hallam and Tennyson upon 'Timbuctoo.'

This little book brought the Cambridge associations to a close; and for the next few years a desultory poem or two, published in annual collections, were all the evidence of Tennyson's progress to maturity. At the same time, he was always at work. 'Alfred Tennyson,' wrote Trench to Donne, as early as in January 1834, 'has so far recovered from the catastrophe in which his sister was involved as to have written some new poems, and, they say, fine ones.' It was a time of laborious production and pre-eminently quiet growth: with a strong effort of will the poet denied himself the satisfaction of immediate performance. It was a time, too, of some privation. The literary beginner's life in London is apt to involve a struggle, and the struggle becomes the sterner when the equipment is the unsought commodity of poetry. So it happens that we hear little of Tennyson in the next few years; he was keeping to himself—as ever, reserved, and, as ever, particular in the choice of his friends. Those friends, however, whose adoption he had tried, were always eager in their admiration. To the small circle already mentioned another of the old undergraduate companions at Trinity comes to be added during the next year—Edward FitzGerald, who stayed with him in Cumberland with the Speddings, in the end of April and beginning of May 1835. 'It was a delightful visit. In the evening FitzGerald would play chess with Spedding's mother, while Tennyson and Spedding retired together to read

over 'Morte d'Arthur,' 'The Lord of Burleigh,' and the rest of the poet's new work. Old Mr. Spedding used to object to his son spending so much time in this friendly criticism. 'Well, Mr. FitzGerald,' he would say, 'and what is it? Mr. Tennyson reads and Jim criticises? Is that it?' FitzGerald never forgot this time, when his favourite 1842 volumes were growing into life and colour, like 'the daffodils breaking round the hall door.' He seems to have been struck, as all who knew Tennyson were struck, by the unusual and sustained promise of his friend. 'The more I have seen of him,' he says, 'the more cause I have to think him great.' While amused with his 'little humours and grumpinesses,' he could not resist, he adds, an occasional feeling of depression 'from the overshadowing of a so much more lofty intellect' than his own. He found in Tennyson 'a universality of the mind,' which benefited him by the consciousness of his own 'dwarfishness.' The affection for the man was even surpassed by his admiration for the poet. He placed him, thus early, second only to Wordsworth, because he felt that Tennyson did 'no little by raising and filling the brain with noble images and thoughts, which purify and cleanse us from mean and vicious objects, and so prepare and fit us for the reception of the higher philosophy.' FitzGerald's early estimate of Tennyson sums itself up in his own words: 'When he has felt life, you will see him acquire all that at present you miss: He will not die fruitless of instruction as he is.' It is pleasant to find that the friend, who was afterwards one of the most candid, and often one of the

least sympathetic of his critics, started, at any rate, full of enthusiasm and of hope for the future. Among new friends, too, whom this London sojourn brought to Tennyson was Thomas Carlyle, who about this time settled down in Cheyne Row to his task of *The French Revolution*, and was one of the first to recognise the genius of the future Laureate.

Meanwhile Tennyson's friendship for that earliest of his friends, Richard Monckton Milnes, was none the less vivid for occasional relapses into silence. 'I shall not easily forget you,' wrote Alfred, during the last month of the year of Hallam's death, 'for you have that about you which one remembers with pleasure.' And during the winter of 1836 Milnes and Tennyson were thrown together in a correspondence which has in it much that is interesting, and even more that is characteristic. Milnes had been deputed to solicit contributions for an annual, called *The Tribute*, edited by Lord Northampton, and published for some charitable purpose. Milnes at once bethought him of his old Cambridge friends, asking with others Trench, Spedding, Aubrey de Vere, and Whewell. Most of them were ready enough to assist: but a difficulty arose over Tennyson's contribution. 'Three years back,' he answered, 'provoked by the incivility of editors, I swore an oath that I would never again have to do with their vapid books.' 'To write for people with prefixes to their names,' he continued, 'is to milk he-goats; there is neither honour nor profit.' Milnes presumably knew his friend, and might with reason have been expected to understand his waywardness. Yet, at that moment, he was vexed

—not only with the refusal, but with the manner of its expression; and Tennyson was treated to one of those momentary flashes of anger which were so characteristic of his correspondent. Tennyson's answer showed how little he had expected to be taken seriously. 'Why, what in the name of all the powers, my dear Richard, makes you run me down in this fashion? . . . What has so jaundiced your good-natured eyes as to make them mistake harmless banter for insolent irony?' So, in a mood of the merriest badinage, he proceeds to a promise to help the annual, if he can, and to get contributions from his brothers as well.

Eventually all three gave their aid: and Alfred's was the aid of his happiest inspiration. The verses which he sent to *The Tribute* were those which afterwards formed the groundwork of 'Maud'—the noble lines beginning—

'Oh that 'twere possible
 After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
 Round me once again!'

It was worth the little difference of opinion to have elicited such a contribution,—'a poem,' as Mr. Swinburne has said, 'of deepest charm and fullest delight of pathos and melody.'

The same winter saw the appearance of another short poem by Tennyson, 'St. Agnes,' which was printed in *The Keepsake* for 1837. The title was altered, in the volume published in 1855, to 'St. Agnes' Eve,' the name by which it has been subsequently known. It is a calm, religious poem, in a manner which has since found more than one imitator: and, no doubt, it was

the kind of poem to appeal to a wide, if slightly unlettered public. At any rate it had some vogue at its appearance: but Tennyson's friends, hearing its fame from afar, appear to have been a little disappointed when they came to read it. 'An iced saint,' said one of them, 'is certainly better than an iced cream, but not much better than a frosted tree. The original Agnes is worth twenty of her.' It is a crude criticism, but there is truth at the heart of it. 'St. Agnes,' displaying the momentary influence of Keble, was not representative of Tennyson's best.

While Alfred's life was harassed by the unsettled fluctuations of a literary struggle, his brother, Charles, was moving through stiller waters. In 1835 he was ordained, and appointed to the curacy of Tealby, and shortly after became Vicar of Grasby, a village in the midst of the Lincolnshire wolds. In 1836 he was married, at Horncastle, to Miss Louisa Sellwood, and on the death of his great-uncle, Mr. Turner, in 1838, he moved to Caistor, some three miles from Grasby, where his brother Alfred was an occasional visitor. At this time he took the name of Turner; but still retained the living of Grasby, where he built a new vicarage and schools.

In 1837 Mrs. Tennyson had to leave Somersby, and moved to High Beach, Essex. Subsequently, three years later, the family settled at Tunbridge Wells, where they only remained one year, moving to Boxley, near Maidstone, in 1841.

It must have been about the time of leaving Somersby that Alfred Tennyson wrote the 'Progress of Spring,' a poem laid aside and forgotten by the writer,

till it turned up again in 1888, to be printed in the 'Demeter' volume in the following year. It was the inspiration of a spring holiday, when the sloe was whitening and the kingcup ablaze,— a holiday, too, of stir and adventure, 'in rickfire days.' And Tennyson himself was out with the other hands to the rescue, passing the buckets to quench the fire of thirty ricks, which had been set alight by roughs, rioting in a demand for 'the People's Charter.' It was at this time that he first knew Miss Mary Boyle (to whom he afterwards dedicated 'The Progress of Spring')—

> 'a lover's fairy dream,
> His girl of girls——

with whom he was to preserve a friendship of more than fifty years. It is supposed, too, that it was to her sister that he addressed the later verses:

> 'Rose, on this terrace fifty years ago.'

Little was published at this time; but Tennyson was brooding over and conceiving his best. 'In Memoriam' was opening into gradual growth: and other poems were being written and re-written, which were shortly to lift his name to the foremost position among the poets of the day. The continual self-criticism, however, did not prevent him from showing his most congenial side to the few friends he encouraged. FitzGerald was often with him—a very appreciative companion. 'We have had Alfred Tennyson here,' he wrote in April 1838 to Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, who was afterwards to be his father-in-law; 'very droll and very wayward: and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning, with

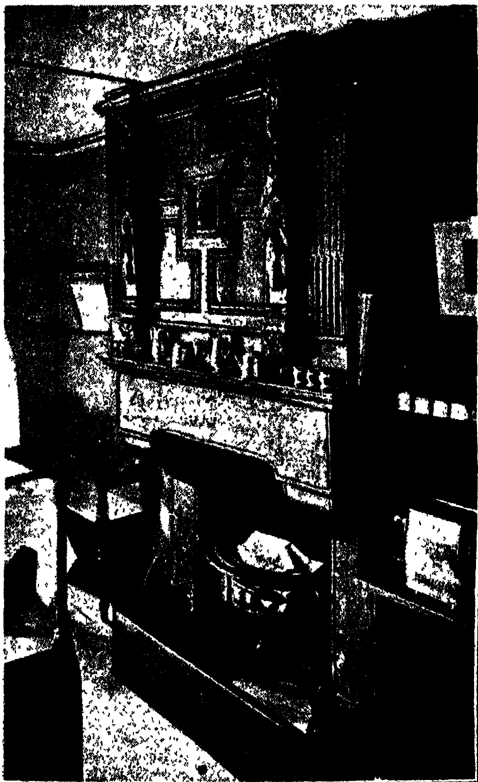
pipes in our mouths: at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking; and so to bed.' Tennyson's friends were always charmed to have him read his work to them, and yet he was never a good reader. His ear, nervously anxious to emphasise the rhythm, was careless of articulation, and the deep monotone, in which he almost chanted the lines, left the actual words strangely indistinct. It required a full knowledge of the poem to appreciate the recitation. 'I rather need to know by heart what he is reading,' wrote the late Sir Henry Taylor many years later; 'for otherwise I find sense to be lost in sound from time to time. . . . The rhythm so sounded loses something of its musical, and more of its intellectual, significance. . . . Nevertheless his reading is very fine of its kind.' So, too, Bayard Taylor: 'His reading is a strange monotonous chant, with unexpected falling inflexions, which I cannot describe, but can imitate exactly. It is very impressive.'

Besides a welcome to single friends, Tennyson had an occasional enthusiasm for literary gatherings. 'The Anonymous Club,' which was afterwards renamed 'The Sterling,' numbered him among its members. It used to meet once a month to discuss philosophical and literary subjects, and the associates must have been men after the poet's heart of hearts. Carlyle was there, and Cunningham, Macready and John Stuart Mill, Forster and Sterling, Thackeray and Walter Savage Landor. A distinguished coterie, and a friendly body of congenial spirits. Here is a dinner invitation from Landor to Tennyson, which, to judge

from its geniality, promises a convivial evening to follow:—

'I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson,
Come and share my haunch of venison.
I have, too, a bin of claret,
Good, but better if you share it.
Tho' 'tis only a small bin,
There's a stock of it within,
And as sure as I'm a rhymer,
Half a butt of Rudesheimer.
Come; among the sons of men is one
Welcomer than Alfred Tennyson?'

And so Tennyson continued during the next year or two, now toiling over his manuscript in his London lodging, now running down into the country with a friend, finding fresh inspiration in every nook; now talking over literary prospects with his associates, or, again, dining at the 'Cock' in Fleet Street, and sitting late into the evening over the pint of port and the cigars. Such a dinner is recalled by Spedding, when the two



FIREPLACE IN THE COCK TAVERN.

dined together, and two chops and a pickle, two cheeses and a pint of stout, preceded the port and the tobacco. The old 'Cock' is swept away now, with a bank on its site; and the enthusiast who is anxious to get a notion of its appearance must content himself with the pictures of its staircase and dining-room, which hang in a room in a new tavern under the old name, almost opposite the Fleet Street end of Chancery Lane. The 'old grill-room,' as it is called, is refitted with the boxes 'larded with the steam of thirty thousand dinners,' with their brass rods and rusty curtains. The fine old oak fire-place has been moved there bodily: the floor is still sanded, and the crockery is of the willow pattern. And ever bustling and hustling his two boy assistants, Paul, himself a waiter at the former house, strives with a genial contempt for conventionality to keep the old spirit astir in the new surroundings. 'Chump chop—oppo*sight* the fireplace. Two kippers in order. Hurry up that rabbit for the chair-table, ple-a-se. Good evening, gentlemen, and thank you.' And Paul rattles you out as hurriedly as he welcomed you in. The 'Lyrical Monologue,' surmounted by a portrait of the 'Cock,' carved by Grinling Gibbons, has been reprinted by the proprietor, and Paul is proud to give his customer a copy. 'Tennyson wrote all that,' he says confidingly, 'wrote it in the old "Cock," after dinner. Tennyson, you know: *Lord* Tennyson now, he is'; and Paul's eyes glisten before the splendour of the title.

When he was not dining at the 'Cock,' Tennyson would have the meal in his own lodgings in Camden

Town, where Trench often joined him. The port was never omitted, though it had to be fetched from a neighbouring public-house. Sometimes the poet's friends would expostulate, and wonder how he kept well on such a dangerous vintage. But Tennyson was easily contented. 'As long as it is sweet, and black, and strong,' he said, 'it 's good enough for me.' And so the evenings were spent; and almost every day some new poem slipped from his pen. His work was continuous; friends were always urging him to publish, but the poet was adamant. Trench regretted the silence. 'I think,' he said, 'with the exception of myself and him, everybody sent to *The Tribute* the poorest, or nearly the poorest things that they had by them. His poem was magnificent.' Milnes regretted it. 'Tennyson composes every day,' he wrote to Aubrey de Vere, 'but nothing will persuade him to print, or even write it down.' But the value of the silence was proved when it was broken. Tennyson was determined that his next volume should be as good as he could make it; and the event justified the labour.

In the early summer of 1840 he was with FitzGerald at Leamington; and the two made pleasant excursions together, visiting, among many places, Kenilworth, and Stratford-on-Avon. The little knot of Cambridge friends still kept together in London. Spedding was living in Lincoln's Inn Fields, working all day at the Colonial Office, and frequently at the theatres at night. 'Pollock and Pride,' says FitzGerald, 'travel to and fro between their chambers in the Temple and Westminster, occasionally varying

their travels, when the Chancellor chooses, to the Courts in Lincoln's Inn.' Tennyson was 'busy preparing for the press, full of doubts and troubles.'

Early in 1842 the little fears and hesitations were at an end: two volumes of *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* were issued by Moxon of Dover Street, and a new era in the poet's reputation had begun. The first volume of the new edition consisted chiefly of poems already published in the 1830 and 1832 collections, some untouched, some slightly altered, others entirely rewritten; while some half-dozen new poems, written for the most part in 1833, were added. The second volume was composed of entirely new poems, with two exceptions—'The Sleeping Beauty,' which appeared in 1830, and 'St. Agnes,' Tennyson's contribution to *The Keepsake* for 1837. Among these new poems were 'The Epic,' 'The Gardener's Daughter,' 'Dora,' 'Audley Court,' 'Walking to the Mail,' 'St. Simeon Stylites,' 'The Talking Oak,' 'Love and Duty,' 'Locksley Hall,' 'Ulysses,' 'Godiva,' 'The Two Voices,' 'Sir Galahad,' 'Edward Gray,' 'Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue,' 'Lady Clare,' 'The Lord of Burleigh,' 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,' 'A Farewell,' 'The Beggar Maid,' 'The Vision of Sin,' 'Break, Break, Break,' and 'The Poet's Song.'

'The Morte d'Arthur' was read to Landor as early as 1837, and 'The Two Voices' was dated 1833 in the first edition. Another bibliographical point worthy of notice is the fact that 'Dora' was suggested by a story of Miss Mitford's, called *Dora Cresswell*, and 'Lady Clare' by Miss Ferrier's novel, *The Inheritance*, which was first published in 1824.

Among poems subsequently omitted was 'The Skipping Rope,' which FitzGerald deprecated from the first.

'Sure never yet was Antelope
Could skip so lightly by.
Stand off, or else my skipping rope
Will hit you in the eye.'

It is a curious evidence of an excursion into a field in which the poet never found his way. It reminds us of the rough humour of 'Amphion,'—an attempt to write with the pen of the popular singer of society. But Tennyson was no drawing-room bard. The swing of the melody is ruined by the triviality of the wit: and FitzGerald's criticism is juster than usual. 'Alfred,' he said, 'whatever he may think, cannot trifle. . . . His smile is rather a grim one. . . . I grieve for the insertion of these little things, on which reviewers and dull readers will fix, so that the right appreciation of the book will be retarded a dozen years.'

The right appreciation of the book, however, was scarcely retarded for six months. *The Quarterly Review* for September 1842 sang a generous palinode, in recantation of its earlier attack, finding the volume 'a real addition to our literature.' 'Among the streams and rocks,' said the reviewer, 'he begins to discourse of virtue; and when he has risen on the ladder of his vision to the stars, we shall hear him singing from the solar way that it is by temperance, soberness, and chastity of soul he has so climbed, and that the praise of this heroic discipline is his last message to mankind.'

Milnes had something to say, too, and an appreciative *critique* from his pen was printed in *The Westminster Review* for October 1842.

Other praise was not wanting. Edgar Allan Poe, in *The Democratic Review*, declared himself unable to decide whether Tennyson was not 'the greatest of poets'; and Charles Dickens, reading his volume at Broadstairs on August 7, 1842, wrote: 'I have been reading Tennyson all this morning by the seashore. Who else could conjure up such a close to the extraordinary, and (as Landor would say) "most woonderful" series of pictures in "The Dream of Fair Women"?—

'"Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hush'd seraglios."'

Dickens's admiration for Tennyson never waned. Two years later, he wrote: 'I have been reading Tennyson again and again. What a great creature he is!' And again, when the 'Idylls' appeared: 'Lord! what a blessed thing it is to read a man who really can write: I thought nothing could be finer than the first poem till I came to the third; but when I had read the last, it seemed to me to be absolutely unapproachable.'

Poe's admiration, also, rose rather than decreased as the years brought new poems from Tennyson's pen. Some five years after his first utterance, he gave another criticism in an essay on 'The Poetic Principle,' which abandoned all uncertainty of sound for a thorough strain of praise. 'In perfect sincerity,'

he wrote, 'I regard Alfred Tennyson as the noblest poet that ever lived. I call him, and think him, the noblest of poets, not because the impresssions he produces are at all times the most profound, not because the poetical excitement which he induces is at all times the most intense, but because it is at all times the most ethereal,—in other words, the most elevating and most pure. No poet is so little of the earth earthy.'

This enthusiasm was not momentary: Poe was continually expressing himself to the same effect. The favourable opinion of the poems entertained by Poe was shared, too, by other critics across the water; and the admiration of Emerson and his followers induced a Boston publisher to reprint the two volumes in an exact facsimile of the English edition. It is pleasing to read amid the turmoil of American piracy that the reprint was issued for the author's benefit. Emerson's estimate was direct and just. 'Tennyson is endowed,' he said, 'precisely in the points where Wordsworth wanted. There is no finer ear, nor more command of the keys of language.'

The rise of Alfred Tennyson must be dated, then, from the appearance of these poems, which derive a singular interest from their instantaneous success. M. Taine declares that the earliest attraction which readers found in Tennyson's work was centred in his portraiture of women—in 'Adeline,' 'Eleanore,' 'Lilian,' and the like,—'Keepsake characters,' he calls them, 'from the hand of a lover and an artist.' It suited M. Taine to trace the vogue of the poet

from these melodious, delicately-tinted lyrics, because his object was to show Tennyson as an artist rather than a thinker, to find him the dreamer of a summer afternoon, a drowsy contrast to Alfred de Musset, who, 'from the heights of his doubt and despair, saw the infinite, felt the inner tempest of deep sensations, quaint dreams, and intense voluptuousness, whose desire enabled him to live, and whose lack forced him to die.' It suited M. Taine to take this view, and the view had a side-light of truth to illumine it. But the critic who saw in Tennyson's early poems merely the languor and restful ease of 'an idle singer of an empty day' was blind to the clearer, the more individual side of his message to mankind. The lyrical poems, the absence of whose 'champagne flavour' FitzGerald mourned in Tennyson's later work, were rich in melody, full of the joy of life, and coloured with the rosy tint of youth; but the poet had a heart for higher things than the sweetest 'ballad made to his mistress' eyebrow.' These formed the riches of his earliest volume, and the riches were great for immaturity. But the interval had brought new gifts, and ripened the old ones into something stronger. It had stirred in the poet that dramatic power of self-effacement, richly manifested in 'St. Simeon Stylites,' and that depth of sympathy with other minds through which alone poetry of the first order can be produced. It had brought him clearer reasoning power, and the faculty of sustained thought, which moves through the rapids of more turbulent emotion to a goal defined and constantly kept in view. It had crystallised fancy and imagina-

tion into a calmer philosophy of life, a philosophy of faith and unshaken confidence in the eternal progress of existence towards the 'far-off divine event,' the ultimate realisation of God's best. With him there was 'no room for sense of wrong': for 'love that never found his earthly close' the sequel was no eternity of despair, no woeful retrospect melting into tears, but a repose of the will, that finds its comfort —not in a rebellious memory—nor yet in entire forgetfulness. Ulysses, after all the wanderings and weariness of the years, is still unwilling to be idle.

> ''Tis not too late to seek a newer world . . . .
> Tho' much is taken, much abides.'

The passion and the restlessness of the forsaken lover in 'Locksley Hall' turn at the last from the prospect of a voluptuous life in the far-away Lotos-land; the distance beckons him to better things: to the 'crescent promise' of a braver life among his own people. The contest of 'The Two Voices' of faith and doubt leaves the poet with a hidden hope for consolation. Even 'The Vision of Sin' ends in a dream of hope, where

> 'On the glimmering limit far withdrawn
> God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.'

It was a poetry of faith and hope, not faithful and hopeful through an absence of doubt, but rising to its consummation through its sense of the insufficiency of doubt to the needs of life. The natural attitude of the human mind is an attitude of hope; despair is the surest sign of disease. But the hope that is born of despair is the strongest, because the most human;

and it is in this very arguing down of doubt that the power and the permanence of Tennyson's poetry lies. The greatest of his poems have ever been those in which he has manifested this comfortable creed.

'Locksley Hall' has been called the poem of a boy's passion, and treated as a piece of sentiment which strikes a false note to the ear of maturer judgment. There is some truth in the criticism: we all love 'Locksley Hall' best at the period of our first impulsive love. There is something over-ecstatic, something that protests too much for the stronger passion of manhood. But the nature that can return upon itself, and live in the past, will never read the poem without a pang. It brings us to boyhood again, to the hour when the small things of life seemed so great, and the loss that was really a blessing appeared to be a curse. And it is well to live in the past sometimes.

One little bibliographical note is, perhaps, worth preservation. Mr. Edmund Gosse has in his possession a copy of the first edition of the 1842 poems which belonged to B. W. Procter (Barry Cornwall). The former owner has inserted in manuscript between the nineteenth and twentieth couplets of 'Locksley Hall' (vol. ii. p. 96) the following lines:—

'In the hall there hangs a painting, Amy's arms are round my neck,
Happy children in a sunbeam, sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there is a picture: she that clasped my neck is flown,
I am left within the shadow, sitting on the wreck alone,'

continuing, my cousin, shallow-hearted.

Now, these lines reappeared in 1886, in 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,' with two slight alterations. In the later version the first line runs 'Amy's arms about my neck,' while in the second couplet the verbs are in the past tense. Apparently they stood in the first draft of 'Locksley Hall,' and were cancelled when the manuscript went to press, eventually forming the germ from which the second poem grew. The point is not without interest as an indication of the way in which a poem is born and developed.

But beside, and very little below his greatest, the volumes contained other poems of strength and beauty. 'The Gardener's Daughter' and 'Dora' are calm, picturesque idylls of the countryside, showing that sympathy with the world's humblest, which is one of the surest proofs of greatness. The 'Conclusion' to the 'May Queen' sounded the final note of hope and resignation which, while it was characteristic of the author, brought the poem at the same time, to a more artistic completion. And perhaps the finest poem in the two volumes, and certainly the most interesting from subsequent association, was 'Morte D'Arthur,' afterwards incorporated, without the prologue and epilogue, with their charming air of personality, into 'The Passing of Arthur,' where it may be more fittingly considered in its relation to the rest of the 'Idylls.' But it is interesting to notice in this context a poem written by Tennyson in a private album, and written without a date, which contains one thought which he afterwards conveyed bodily into the 'Morte d'Arthur.' The album lines are as follows :—

'Over the bleak world flies the wind
  And clatters in the sapless trees.
From cloud to cloud through darkness blind
  Swift stars scud over sounding seas.
I look; the showery skirts unbind;
  Mars by the lonely Pleiades
Burns overhead; with brows declined
  I muse—I wander from my peace,
Dividing still the rapid mind
  This way, and that, in search of ease.'

The reader will recall the picture of Bedivere, with Excalibur in his hand, hesitating for a moment to cast it into the mere—

'This way and that dividing the swift mind.'

The effect of the new volume was instantaneous. From a graceful singer, stringing together with ease and elegance a series of harmonious melodies, Tennyson became a poet with a message to mankind. From the uncertain position of a satellite in the 'milky-way of Keats' he grew into a star of the first magnitude. Among many proofs of the estimation which the volume brought him stands a very calm and critical analysis of his position, which appeared in 1844 in Richard Hengist Horne's *A New Spirit of the Age*. The second volume, which had for frontispiece a copy of Lawrence's portrait of Tennyson, the first portrait ever drawn, opens with a detailed discussion of the new poet's performance. Horne blows a trumpet of no uncertain sound in praise of Tennyson. He claims for him a position 'as a true poet of the highest order,' and considers his reputation to be 'thoroughly established.' He notices the gradual development of Tennyson from

Keats, and distinguishes between natural development and unnatural imitation. Tennyson, he finds, has a voice of his own. 'In music and colour he was equalled by Shelley; but in form he stands unrivalled.' Finally, though he believes Tennyson 'may do greater things than he has done,' he does not expect it. And he ends: 'If he do no more, he has already done enough to deserve the lasting love and admiration of posterity.'

In the same year Elizabeth Barrett, hurling off 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' at the top of her pace, to fill an empty sheet in the two-volume edition of her poems (itself designed in rivalry to Tennyson's own), classed with the most attractive literature of the day 'Tennyson's enchanted reverie.'

It was towards the end of 1843 that Elizabeth Barrett was first introduced to Tennyson, and the introduction was effected strangely enough. An American friend of the poetess sent her a *critique* of the 1842 volumes, with the request that she would forward it to Tennyson. As she had never met him, and as, moreover, the notice was not unreservedly genial, she felt some compunction; but at last she took courage. The result was in every way gratifying. Tennyson wrote her a most amiable letter, and from this time her interest in him increased. Indeed, when R. H. Horne was occupied on *A New Spirit of the Age*, Elizabeth Barrett assisted him in his work, and showed especial interest in writing him her estimate of Tennyson. Her admiration was so sincere that she found it difficult to analyse him, and summed up her opinion in the decision that he was 'a

divine poet.' She had but one reservation: she preferred Leigh Hunt's 'Godiva' to Tennyson's.

Another little picture rises to the mind's eye in connection with the rapid appreciation of Tennyson's work,—the scene of the luncheon-party in *Cranford* where Mr. Holbrook, the old bachelor, entertains Miss Matty, Miss Pole, and Mary at Woodley. In the afternoon the host proposes a walk, and 'as some tree or cloud, or glimpse of distant upland pastures struck him, he quoted poetry to himself, saying it out loud in a grand, sonorous voice, with just the emphasis that true feeling and appreciation give. We came upon an old cedar-tree, which stood at one end of the house:

'The cedar spreads his dark green layers of shade.'

'Capital term—layers. Wonderful man!' muttered Mr. Holbrook to himself. And he adds that, when he read the review of Tennyson in *Blackwood*, he walked seven miles to order a copy of the poems. The old man's love for nature is caught by the poet's observation, which had seen that ash-buds are black in March,—a fact that would escape many a gardener's notice.

Tennyson had, indeed, a message for every sort and condition of man.

In the year following the appearance of the *Poems* Southey died, and the Laureateship was vacant. There was never any serious notion that Tennyson would be selected as Southey's successor; but the increase in his reputation is attested by the fact that he appears among the possible candidates

in the humorous competition recounted in Sir Theodore Martin and Professor Aytoun's 'Bon Gaultier Ballads.' The parodists equip him with a poem in his own favour which catches a happy echo of his manner :—

> 'Who would not be
> The Laureate bold,
> With his butt of sherry
> To keep him merry,
> And nothing to do but to pocket his gold?
> 'Tis I would be the Laureate bold.'

And there is yet another occasion interesting for its early connection of two names which the later years drew together into very close communion. In the year following the appearance of the *Poems*, an Oxford Debating Society called 'The Decade' discussed in Oriel common room the proposition that 'Alfred Tennyson is the greatest English poet of the age.' The society included at the time much of the most promising talent in the University; and the claim of Wordsworth to a position higher than that of his subsequent successor was vigorously pleaded by Arthur Hugh Clough, who two years before had been elected to an Oriel fellowship. Clough seems to have found in Tennyson a fault—which was fairly attributable to some of his earlier work—a certain conscious straining after effect, a sensuous inclination to melody, and a neglect of matter in the cultivation of manner. But in Wordsworth he recognised, together with an occasional tendency to prose, a spontaneous utterance of good things without consciousness of their goodness.

The two rivals of 'The Decade' debate met, it

is not without interest to note, in the same year, at the house of Moxon the publisher. Tennyson's opinion of the Poet Laureate is not recorded; but Wordsworth, in a letter to Professor Reid of Philadelphia, expresses his thorough recognition of the younger man's genius, generously declaring him 'decidedly the first of our living poets.'

The admiration of Oxford was even surpassed by the affection of Chelsea. Mrs. Carlyle, sending Tennyson's autograph, together with those of Dickens and Lord Lytton, to Miss Welsh, declared Tennyson to be 'the greatest genius of the three,' and begged her friend to read 'Ulysses,' 'Dora,' and 'The Vision of Sin,' when she would find that he was not overrated. 'He is a very handsome man, besides!' she adds, womanlike, 'and a noble-hearted one, with something of the gipsy in his appearance, which for me is perfectly charming!'

Carlyle's own description of his soul's 'Brother,' as he called him, is even more vivid, sketched in with his crude, powerful touch:

'A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free and easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic,—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe.'

The verdict of his Cambridge friends was becoming the verdict of the wider world beyond; and the days of Tennyson's uncertainty were over.

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNINGS OF FAME

LITERARY success always requires two elements for its composition: there must be genius in the author, and there must be opportunity. A writer born after his due time, however unquestionable his power, escapes notice altogether: or at the best receives the faint praise bestowed upon an old-fashioned product, which has only the merit of curiosity to commend it. A writer born before his time is attacked as a revolutionist, or ridiculed as a madman; it is not till the next generation that his work is understood and appreciated. Hence it comes that so much reputation is posthumous; the author lacked opportunity; his time was not yet come. Every now and again a revolution in popular sentiment works a revolution in literature: the air is full of new thoughts and new ideals, and there is need of a man to give utterance to the aspirations of the new era. This is the opportunity: this is the moment when the true poet and the inspired novelist show the nation its natural face in the glass of literature. It is this opportunity, and this faculty of seizing the right moment, that make the man an artist, and his work the voice of an epoch.

For ten years the genius of Tennyson had lacked acknowledgment, when in 1842 he burst into sudden fame; and the increase in his reputation surpassed the improvement in his workmanship. The ten years silence had strengthened and matured his talents, it is true; but many of the poems, which were on every one's lips in 1842, had been sneered at as effeminate and unintelligible ten years before. What was the reason of this sudden change of front, this instantaneous admiration for what had hitherto been neglected? The reason is near at hand; the ten years that intervened had brought the opportunity. At the moment in which Tennyson published his two volumes in 1842 a new era was opening to literature; and he, who in 1832 had been ten years before his time, was now discovered to be speaking with the tongue of the angel of the age. He had found the ripe moment, and had seized upon it. The French Revolution had been followed by the outburst of fierce, unrestrained licence, which animated the poetry of Byron and Shelley. The reaction followed. The Lake School of poetry slipped to the other extreme, to an unimpassioned simplicity and pure innocence which proved, in their turn, weak and unsatisfying. The mind of the age was nauseated by a somewhat colourless propriety; Miss Edgeworth and Miss Jane Austen were being elbowed from their bookshelves by Dickens, Thackeray, and Bulwer Lytton. There was need for a new poet, too. The time was ripe for a literature that should fuse together the characteristics of the last two epochs, should temper Shelley with Wordsworth, and dilute Byron with Rogers. It

wanted a poetry, too, which, while it worked the old elements into combination, should take to itself the spirit and sentiment of the moment. The hour was an hour of struggle, of contest between doubt and faith, an hour of religious controversy and scepticism. But the prevailing note was faith, faith rising like a phœnix out of the ashes of doubt, and soaring heavenward. This was the spirit of the hour: it was also the spirit of Tennyson's poetry.

It is interesting to notice how the field was clearing for him. In 1822 Wordsworth issued the 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets,' but after that date 'Yarrow Revisited,' in 1835, was his only important publication. In 1834 Coleridge died after nine years' silence; and Crabbe, the minute photographer of poetry, had then been dead two years. Samuel Rogers's last great work, 'Italy,' was published in 1828, and Southey was devoting himself exclusively to prose at the time of Tennyson's appearance. The same was true of Thomas Campbell, and also of Moore, who in 1842 had published no poetry for nearly twenty years. Sir Walter Scott had died in 1832, and two slighter, but extremely popular writers, Mrs. Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon (L.E.L.), in 1835 and 1832 respectively. The opportunity had come for the new poetry. It was to be idyllic with Wordsworth, and dramatic with Byron; but it was to be something more than either of these. It was to be powerfully, mercilessly psychological, probing to the heart of the thought, with its finger upon the pulse of the passion. It was to be dramatically introspective, laying bare the souls of the characters it studied. The oppor-

tunity had come, and the poets came with it. 'Pauline,' which appeared in 1833, was one evidence of the new spirit; 'The Drama of Exile,' published in 1844, was another; and a third was the two-volume collection of *Poems* by Alfred Tennyson, issued in 1842. Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, and Alfred Tennyson were the voices of the new era; and the clearest and most direct utterance was that of Tennyson. The age recognised him first as its prophet; and, as soon as it knew him, it welcomed him.

The unique position of Tennyson, as an influence drawing together the poetry of the earlier and the later years of the century, is not, perhaps, sufficiently recognised. No poet has so singularly combined the attributes of the old and the new. Without in any case borrowing from his predecessors, he softened and broadened their manner into a tone which prepared poetry for its later development, a development to which he continually gave the first, half-latent impulse. The domestic idyll of Crabbe assumed a less rigid form in 'Dora'; the wild, graphic dreams of Coleridge smote themselves into the second movement of 'The Vision of Sin.' In 'Edward Gray' the poet caught and mellowed the accent of the domestic ballad, whose best example may be found in 'Barbara Allan.' 'Requiescat' is pure Wordsworth: what is not Shelley in 'The Lover's Tale' is Keats. Meanwhile the new poetry was foretold in many suggestive instances. 'St. Simeon Stylites' was the first of those dramatic monologues to which Robert Browning subsequently lent the vigour and

unfettered strength of his imagination. 'The Sisters' spoke with the tongue of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Mr. William Morris: 'Fatima' was the mother of 'Dolores' and 'Faustine.' But nowhere are the vivid pictures of the pre-Raphaelite school more brilliantly forecast than in that extraordinary lyric, 'The Lady of Shalott.' This singular poem is referred to in more than one context in the present study but its consideration here may help us to a clearer understanding of Tennyson's intermediary position. The mirror into which the Lady gazes is, in the first place, of course, the mirror which always stood behind the tapestry, whose face was turned to the glass, so that the worker could see the effect of her stitches without moving from her seat. But it has another use. Every view which the earlier part of the poem presents is cast upon the mirror. Scene follows scene as in a *camera lucida*, vivid, detailed, delicate. This is the exact attitude of the pre-Raphaelites. The clear microcosm, reflected in the mirror, is the earth as it appears to them, every tiny part of the picture standing out in crisp, individual relief. A stranger prophecy of a phenomenon to come is nowhere to be found in poetry. And directly the mirror cracks, the whole spirit of the poem changes. Suddenly we are in the open air with the Lady: the breeze is in our faces, we are out upon the stream. The pictures are no longer the pictures of the mirror; they are the sounds and sights of living, moving nature. And with the end comes again the pre-Raphaelite touch, the subtle art of sinking which lent such a charm to their manner:

'He said: "She has a lovely face."'

It is word for word as Rossetti would have said it.

It is the same with 'Sir Galahad.' The rich, sensuous side of the Catholic ritual is portrayed with a wealth of luxurious colour:

'When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.'

To hold together the threads of two poetic periods, to draw the one into harmony with the other, is to prove one's-self a poet of poets. An imitator can excel in a single style; a genius alone can be consummate in all. At the moment, Tennyson's position could not, in the nature of things, be wholly understood. But this singular birth of a new power from the old could not fail to amaze. His critics could not analyse at once: like Elizabeth Barrett, they stood in silence to wonder; or, with the horde of the less enlightened, waited a moment to mock. But friendly or unfriendly, they felt the novelty of the influence, and acknowledged the coming of a poetry which was unlike anything they had seen before. And so, with but few to question him, the poet passed into fame.

His sudden rise into greatness, however, brought with it for Tennyson none of the dangers of a reputation eagerly thrust upon him. The natural temperament of the man resisted the temptations of fame.

The old shyness, the old relapses into long silence, were still the complaint of his friends. Moreover, he was seriously unwell, and his condition caused grave anxiety to his well-wishers. 'If anything were to happen to Tennyson,' wrote Elizabeth Barrett, 'the world should go into mourning.' He was obliged to undergo a course of hydropathy, which was thoroughly distasteful to him. Βίος ἄβιος he called it: and it left him even less eager for society than before. 'Hydropathy,' said FitzGerald, 'has done its worst: he writes the names of his friends in water!' At the same time he is reported as 'in very good looks'; and Lawrence was anxious to paint a portrait of the rising poet. Many men would have been carried away by the pride of admiration; but Tennyson preferred to reap the harvest of his fame in the society of the friends he loved. Foremost among these were the Carlyles, and with the Chelsea philosopher he spent many evenings, smoking 'the strongest and most stinking tobacco out of a small clay pipe,' which was between his teeth, 'on an average, nine hours a day.' One night in especial lived in Carlyle's memory. Tennyson stayed late, forgot his stick, and the Carlyles dismissed him by singing 'Macpherson's Farewell,' a 'tune,' said Carlyle, 'rough as hemp, but strong as a lion':

'Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
  The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
  On yonder gallows-tree.
    Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
    Sae dauntingly gaed he:
    He played a spring and danced it round,
    Below the gallows-tree.'

And the rude tune and stirring words moved Tennyson so much that his 'face grew darker' and his lips quivered.

Carlyle's appreciation of Tennyson was a thing of growth, as affection for a reserved character is wont to be. There is a well-known story that tells of Sir John Simeon's introduction to the young poet by Carlyle at Bath House, when the philosopher, pointing Tennyson out to his friend, remarked, 'There he sits upon a dung-heap, surrounded by innumerable dead dogs'; the poet's inclination for classical subjects suggesting the indecorous simile. But when once they knew each other, Carlyle was the first to acknowledge his mistake.—'Eh! that wasn't a very luminous description of you,' he said, with a laugh.

The beginnings of fame came to Tennyson very quietly; and all the while he was busy on 'In Memoriam.' FitzGerald, always a little fearful for the future, always looking back with regret to the early lyrics with their melody and love of colour, heard of the project with some perturbation. 'Don't you think,' he wrote to W. B. Donne, 'the world wants other notes than elegiac now? "Lycidas" is the utmost length an elegiac should reach. But Spedding praises: and I suppose the elegiacs will see daylight, public daylight, one day.'

The work was done, now in London, now at the sea by Beachy Head; or again at Cheltenham, in 'a nasty house in Bellevue Place,' as the poet himself wrote. Hither Mrs. Tennyson had moved, after a three years' sojourn at Boxley near Maidstone, in 1844.

The mental occupation left Tennyson restless and uncertain, at one time half-decided to start for Cornwall, at another for Switzerland, and finally hesitating whether he should go anywhere at all. When he went into society, which he did but seldom, he mixed as little as possible with the surroundings. At some theatricals, got up by Dickens and Forster, he was met by Mrs. Carlyle, who found him in a long, dim passage, leaning against the wall, apparently attempting to fall asleep. To her enthusiastic greeting he gave a characteristic response. 'I should like to know who you are,' he said; 'I know that I know you, but I cannot tell your name.' But when once the ice was broken, he was genial enough; and the following Sunday he appeared at Chelsea in a cab, bent upon spending the evening alone with Mrs. Carlyle, a little project that was frustrated by the presence of visitors. 'However, he stayed till eleven.'

But his retiring modesty could not keep him altogether in the background. He was frequently to be found with Rogers, 'the dean of poets,' as Crabb Robinson called him; and at his house on January 31st, 1845, he met Moxon, Kenny the dramatic poet, Lushington, Spedding, and Crabb Robinson himself, at dinner. It was 'an interesting party of eight,' and Tennyson and Robinson had a long talk over Goethe. One lady, who was asked especially to meet Tennyson, arrived late; and after a little mystery proved to be the Hon. Mrs. Norton, about this time the centre of much social discussion. Robinson found her graceful and accomplished, though she

'stepped a little near his prejudices by a harsh sentence about Goethe.' At Rogers's too, Tennyson met at different times, Leigh Hunt, Landor, Tom Moore, and Mr. W. E. Gladstone.

So, by degrees, Tennyson dropped into society of the most prominent Englishmen of the day, and his distinction was so generally recognised, and the value of his work so widely appreciated, that a circle of his friends conceived a scheme which should free him from pecuniary embarrassment, and enable him to devote himself to literature without the obligation of earning enough to procure him the bare necessities of life. It was proposed to obtain for him a pension, which should be sufficient to keep him in moderate competence; and, mainly through the energy of Milnes, Sir Robert Peel, then Prime Minister, was approached upon the subject. The outset must have been a little discouraging to the young enthusiasts, for Sir Robert (it is a well-known story) had never heard of the poet at all. Milnes, quite undaunted, sent the Prime Minister a copy of the 1842 volumes, with 'Locksley Hall' and 'Ulysses' marked. There was a rival in the field in the person of Sheridan Knowles, with whom Peel was equally unfamiliar; and Milnes in a letter accompanying the poems strongly advocated the gift of the pension to Tennyson, pointing out that it was in the interest of English literature that his faculties should not be 'diverted from their proper use by the sordid anxiety of a struggle for existence.' His efforts were rewarded, and a pension of £200 a year was bestowed upon the author of 'Ulysses,' a poem, the high

qualities of which the Prime Minister immediately recognised.

A beneficence of this kind, however, could scarcely pass without some unfavourable comment; and in the autumn of 1845 an anonymous poem, entitled 'The New Timon; a Romance of London,' satirised with an almost venomous candour the 'quartering on the public purse' of a young man without either wife or family. The poem was generally known to be the work of Edward Lytton Bulwer, afterwards Lord Lytton; and that it was sufficiently severe may be gathered from the following brief extract:

'Let schoolmiss Alfred vent her chaste delight
In darling little rooms so warm and bright,
Chant "I 'm a-weary" in infectious strain,
And catch "the blue fly singing i' the pane."
Tho' praised by critics and admired by Blues,
Tho' Peel with pudding plump the puling Muse,
Tho' Theban taste the Saxon purse controls,
And pensions Tennyson while starves a Knowles . . .'

It was an ungenerous attack, perhaps; and Tennyson unfortunately allowed himself to reply in a set of verses which appeared over the signature 'Alcibiades' in *Punch* of the 28th of February 1846. 'The New Timon and the Poets,' as Tennyson called his reply, certainly hit back from the shoulder with a will:

'But you, sir, you are hard to please,
You never look but half content,
Nor like a gentleman at ease,
With moral breadth of temperament.

And what with spite, and what with fears,
You cannot let a body be,
It's always singing in your ears,
"They call this man as great as me!"

What profits how to understand
  The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
  If half the little soul is dirt?'

Keen fighting! But the whole thing is too undignified, and one turns with pleasure to the Tennyson of a week after, who in the same paper sang his palinode 'Afterthought,' which is now included in his poems under the title 'Literary Squabbles.'

'And I, too, talk and lose the touch
  I talk of. Surely, after all,
The noblest answer unto such
  Is perfect stillness when they brawl.'

It is the poet who speaks there:

'Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn';

and it is pleasant to remember that the dissentients forgot their early quarrel, and were afterwards ready to say the handsomest things of one another.

CHAPTER VI

FROM *THE PRINCESS* TO *IN MEMORIAM*

DURING the year which saw this little passage of arms the *Poems* ran into a fourth edition, in which 'The Golden Year' was first added; and the following year witnessed the appearance of another of Tennyson's most notable poems, 'The Princess,' published by Edward Moxon in 1847. It is generally considered that the germ of 'The Princess' is to be found in Dr. Johnson's 'Rasselas,' the following quotation pointing to the probability of its inspiration: 'The Princess thought that of all sublunary things knowledge was the best. She desired first to learn all sciences, and then proposed to found a college of learned women, in which she would preside.' Other suggestions have attributed to Defoe and Margaret Cavendish's 'Female Academy' the inspiration which does not actually require an original. It is simple and natural enough to stand alone. The germ, whatever it may have been, developed by degrees. No poem of Tennyson's has been so much corrected, or so often re-edited as this. The first edition was followed by a second in the next year, the new issue being dedicated to Henry Lushington, with whom the poet was staying in September 1847. The

corrections so far were but few, and these merely verbal; but with the third edition, issued in 1850, the work underwent radical changes. The songs were added, and the Prologue and Conclusion remodelled. In the following year a fourth edition found the second stanza of the first song omitted, the fourth song altered, and the passages alluding to the Prince's 'weird seizures' introduced. A fifth reprint in 1853 received a further addition of fifteen lines, forming the fourth paragraph of the prologue.

Two of Tennyson's friends are connected with 'The Princess.' The scene of the introduction is the garden at Swainston, the seat of the late Sir John Simeon, in the Isle of Wight, and the host, Sir Walter Vivian, is Sir John Simeon himself. The dedication to Henry Lushington is also interesting, since it was probably the outcome of the poet's visit to his friend at the time when he was reconsidering the poem for its second edition. The friendship between the two was already of some six years' standing, and Tennyson appears to have had a very high opinion of Lushington's taste. Indeed, he has been known to declare that of all the criticism he received from his friends, Lushington's was the most suggestive. It must have been sympathetic also, since Lushington is reported to have known almost the whole of his friend's work by heart.

That 'The Princess' was 'well liked' we learn from FitzGerald, who, however, could find no good word for it himself. 'I am considered,' he wrote to the poet's brother Frederick, 'a great heretic for abusing it; it seems to me a wretched waste of power



IN THE GARDEN AT SWAINSTON.

At p. 106

at a time of life when a man ought to be doing his best; and I almost feel hopeless about Alfred now. I mean about his doing what he was born to do.' FitzGerald's view of what Tennyson was born to do is discovered to be a little capricious, however. About the same time we find him waking from a study of Thucydides to yearn for the spectacle of 'old Hallam' standing to his gun at a Martello tower, while Alfred shared his peril and his enthusiasm. 'A more heroic figure to lead the defenders of his country could not be.' The notion seems a little strained to our estimate of the poet, who, at the same time, was not uninterested in public events and the life of the world of action. Mr. Aubrey de Vere found him, at this very moment, 'very indignant at the events in France, crying, "Let us not see a French soldier land on the English shore, or I will tear him limb from limb." 'Which,' says the lesser poet, 'is a very wholesome feeling.' And in the same letter we get a characteristic avowal of Tennyson's politics from his own lips. Aubrey de Vere asked him whether he were a Conservative. 'I believe in progress,' said Tennyson, 'and I would conserve the hopes of man.' It is the very keynote of his poetry.

It is the keynote, too, of 'The Princess.' Through all emendations and additions, chiefly interesting to the bibliographer, the spirit and intention of the poem remain unchanged. While it served, on the one hand, as a piece to be staged with all the refinement of the poet's taste, backed by richly-coloured and harmonious scenery, it carried at its heart the poet's invariable creed. The means by

which the creed is enforced are new; there are a vein of humour and a line of satire running through the poem. But in the new setting the old note is the keynote; the old note of gradual development, of steady progress, 'conserving the hopes of man.' No social revolution, no impetuous crusade for woman's rights, can effect the good that must come by degrees. The emancipated woman is no heroine to the poet; he knows a better:

'Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the Gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place. . . .

Happy he
With such a mother! Faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay.'

It is through the love of such a woman that a man accomplishes his manhood. The affections cannot be repressed: without love life is unfinished.

Apart from this underlying motive, which rises to the surface only with the end of the poem, 'The Princess' is little but a dreamy story to read in a garden on a summer afternoon, full of music, and fuller still of rich and suggestive imagery. The insertion of the songs, delicate and beautiful in themselves, serves only to accentuate the artificiality of the whole work. Tennyson's detractors are ready to accuse him of over-refinement; of an eye too prone to colour, and an ear too sensitive to melody, losing in their rapture the sights and sounds of the real, eternal truth. If such an accusation were to be

urged, it could, perhaps, be best urged from an analysis of 'The Princess.' For here Tennyson is in his dreamiest and his least virile mood; here he indulges his senses to the waste of his thought. There is a time for everything; and 'The Princess' is not without its special charm. It is not Tennyson's highest work, neither is it his lowest; it merely requires a sympathetic temperament in the reader to appear satisfying. It needs a temperament of momentary laziness, apt to languor and inclined to a light satire, which shall not busy itself to wound too deeply. With this mind we shall find 'The Princess' a storehouse of good things, a midsummer day's dream with a spell and fantasy that hold us to the end.

The story might be translated from the *Arabian Nights*, so picturesque and improbable are the incidents. The cold, white Ida in love with study, the adventurous Hilarion and his imprudent companions, Lady Blanche ambitious and visionary, Psyche tender and womanly—they are characters from a fairy tale. And mixed with the quaint old-world flavour of the whole are curious memories of Cambridge life, making the poem half a burlesque of university rule. There are the statutes:

'Not for three years to correspond with home;
Not for three years to cross the liberties;
Not for three years to speak with any men.'

And again there is the clearer memory:

'Scarce had I ceased when from a tamarisk near
Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying, "Names:"
He, standing still, was clutch'd; but I began
To thrid the musky-circled mazes, wind

And double in and out the boles, and race
By all the fountains; fleet I was of foot
Before me shower'd the rose in flakes; behind
I heard the puff'd pursuer'

There is a reminiscence of Cambridge here, and a vivid one. And, breaking through the veil of the story ever and again, come perfect little pictures of the company, which lend an elfin beauty to the fanciful tale.

'Many a little hand
Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the rocks
Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
In the dark crag and then we turn'd, we wound
About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,
Hammering and clinking, chattering stony names
Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and tuff,
Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun
Grew broader towards his death and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns'

Truly, it is the dream of a midsummer afternoon, a story of infinite imagination and enchantment.

It is strange that FitzGerald, with his affection for the 'champagne flavour' of the early lyrics, should have missed the sparkle and the bouquet of 'The Princess.' He even called the poem which he could not understand 'accursed.' It was not 'a very luminous description'; the truer critic would have seen the merits, even where he failed to catch the temperament. FitzGerald's criticism, however, was wont to lack illumination.

A facsimile of the MS. of the songs, complete, except for the omission of 'Sweet and Low,' was published by Professor Theodore Rand some years ago in the *M'Master University Monthly*, showing some interesting variations between the reading of

the MS. and the songs as they now stand. In the first song, 'As through the land at eve we went,' the fourth and thirteenth lines,

> 'O we fell out, I know not why,'

and

> 'O there above the little grave,'

are omitted. In 'The splendour falls on castle walls' the refrain

> 'Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
> Blow, bugle; answer echoes, dying, dying, dying,'

is not found, but the word ('Chorus'), inserted in a different ink, seems to suggest that a refrain was to follow. The fourth song opens in the MS.

> 'When all among the thundering drums
> Thy soldier in the battle stands,'

and ends,

> 'Strike him dead for them and thee.
> Tara ta tantara!'

The fifth song has received only one verbal alteration,—'watching' for 'whispering' in the second line, and in 'Ask me no more,' two slight corrections alone disturb the perfection of its original form. The MS. reads 'With fold on fold,' which has since been altered to 'With fold *to* fold'; while 'I strove against the stream, and all in vain,' was originally written, 'I strive against the stream, *but* all in vain.'

Mr. Percy M. Wallace, in his thoughtful study of 'The Princess,' argues with some ingenuity that the songs fall readily into the scheme of the whole work; all six centring round the affections, while four have special reference to the beauty of married love. The

suggestion, if somewhat too academic and methodical, is at least worthy of consideration.

Between the editions of 'The Princess,' Tennyson found time to hurry to Valentia to 'inhale Atlantic breezes and listen to the divine sea': he also saw a single-volume edition of his poems through the press in 1848. It was of this visit to Valentia that he used to say, as Professor Stanford has recounted: 'I looked out over the ocean with all the revolutions in Europe behind me.' During the next year he printed little; the verses 'To ——,'

'You might have won the Poet's name,

which appeared in *The Examiner* on March 24th, being his only publication. He was busy on 'In Memoriam,' which absorbed all his energy. FitzGerald saw him often, and found him 'the same noble and droll fellow he used to be,' and they discussed 'Pendennis' together. Alfred thought it 'quite delicious,' and 'so mature,' and delivered the criticism 'over the fire, spreading his great hand out.' At this time he was in chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, at number 58, and spent such time as was not given to work in visits to the Lushingtons, and dinners with FitzGerald, Frederick Denison Maurice, and other friends. Among these others was Mr. Coventry Patmore, who first met Tennyson at the Procters' in 1846. The author of 'The Angel in the House' had been inspired to a fresh enthusiasm for poetry, which he had neglected since his boyhood for a study of the Exact Sciences, by the appearance of the *Poems* in 1842. From that time he was most



EXTERIOR VIEW OF SHIPLAKE CHURCH

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anxious to meet Tennyson: and, when they met, they found each other sympathetic, and were continually together. Their names are connected by one of the most engrossing anecdotes which Tennyson's life affords; and one which, I believe, has not yet been told in print.

About the time that 'The Princess' was engaging the attention of London, Tennyson left the city for a visit to the country. One morning, Mr. Coventry Patmore, then occupied at the British Museum, received a letter from his friend, saying that he had left, in the drawer of his lodging-house dressing-table, the entire and only manuscript of 'In Memoriam,' begging Patmore, moreover, to rescue it for him. Patmore hurried to the lodgings, to find the room in the possession of a new tenant, and the landlady very unwilling to have cupboards and drawers ransacked. It was not without much persuasion that Patmore was admitted to the room, where he found the manuscript still untouched.

This identical copy was afterwards given by Tennyson to Sir John Simeon, and is—at the moment at which these words are written—still in Lady Simeon's possession.

Tennyson's carelessness with regard to his manuscript seems to have grown into a habit. Two similar instances are recorded by Dr. Japp. The MS. of *Poems, chiefly Lyrical* was, we are told, lost and reproduced from memory; while section xxxix. of 'In Memoriam,' 'Old warder of these buried bones,' having slipped into the back of a writing desk, was not included in its proper context until the issue of Messrs. Strahan's pocket-volume edition in 1870.

But to return to 1849. It was a quiet year—a

time of rest before a period of movement: for the year after was to be full of interest. In 1850 he published 'In Memoriam,' married, and became Poet Laureate. This year also saw a sixth edition of the *Poems*, and a third of 'The Princess.' It was the most noteworthy year of his life.



INTERIOR OF SHIPLAKE CHURCH

In the early months he was in his chambers at Lincoln's Inn, busy on the songs for 'The Princess': his friend's letters contain no allusion to the prospect of his marriage. They found him unchanged, 'full of his 'dear old stories and many new ones,' but a little aged. 'I wish I could take twenty years off Alfred's shoulders,' said FitzGerald, 'and set him up again in his youthful glory!' But FitzGerald was

always recurring to those youthful performances, and the best years of Tennyson's work were yet to come.

Early in 1850 Moxon published 'In Memoriam,' at which the poet had been at work for a long while. The venture was viewed by his friends with some apprehension. Five years before FitzGerald had deprecated the idea, believing that 'Lycidas' was as long as an elegiac poem should be, and that the public preferred other notes. Spedding had praised the poem, however; and though within a few months of its appearance Tennyson seems to have intended to print it for private circulation only, he decided eventually to give it full publicity. It was issued anonymously as a volume of 210 pages, with seven pages of introductory matter, and the second and third edition differed only from the first in their correction of two actual misprints. The poem was scarcely before the public when Wordsworth died, on the twenty-third of April, and the literary world began to discuss the succession to the Laureateship. There were several candidates in the field. Samuel Rogers was approached upon the subject, but was unwilling to accept the position: Barry Cornwall, too, preferred to stand aloof. Leigh Hunt and Dr. C. Mackay were each considered to have a chance, and Browning's name was also mentioned. Leigh Hunt, when the final choice fell on Tennyson, confessed that, though he believed the selection a wise one, he was a little disappointed that his own claim had proved insufficient. *The Athenæum* suggested that, as a woman was on the throne, a woman might fitly be Laureate, and on this ground advocated the appointment of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The wonder and babble of the discussion were in full swing when on the thirteenth of June Tennyson was married. His wife was Miss Emily Sellwood, niece of Sir John Franklin, and daughter of a solicitor at Horncastle, where she and the poet had met during his Lincolnshire days. She was the eldest of three daughters, the youngest of whom married Tennyson's brother Charles. Her mother had died at the early age of twenty-eight, when Tennyson was but seven



SHIPLAKE RECTORY.*

years old. Alfred and his wife were married at Shiplake Church, a picturesque building, rich in carved oak and stained glass, not far from Caversham; the bride's father, some of the Lushingtons, and two or three other friends, being the only guests. Miss Mary Russell Mitford gives the following picturesque

* The letter T marks the room occupied by Tennyson during the days immediately preceding his marriage.

description of the church: 'The Tower, half clothed with ivy, stands with its charming vicarage and pretty vicarage garden on a high eminence overhanging one of the finest bends of the great river. A woody lane leads from the church to the bottom of the chalk cliff, one side of which stands out from the road below like a promontory, surmounted by the laurel hedges and flowery arbours of the vicarage garden, and crested by a noble cedar of Lebanon.'

After their marriage the Tennysons settled at Twickenham, at Chapel House, standing at the corner of Montpelier Row, which runs from the Thames to the Richmond Road. It is characteristic of the poet that when Milnes offered, on the occasion of the wedding, to place at his disposal for life a wing of his house at Fryston, Tennyson did not accept the offer. One almost wonders that Milnes should have been so far carried away by friendly enthusiasm as to suggest it.

Among the earliest of Tennyson's friends who met his wife was Spedding; and he was charmed with her. But the old circle complained that Alfred now withdrew more than ever into himself. 'You know,' said FitzGerald, 'he never writes, nor indeed cares a halfpenny about one.' The same critic was sadly discontent with 'In Memoriam,' too, for though he found it full of the finest things, he thought it monotonous, with 'the sense of being evolved by a poetic machine of the highest order.'

Tennyson was not keeping altogether to himself, however; he and his bride were moving about among his friends, and in the November of the same year Carlyle met them both at Trent Lodge in Cum-

berland. Then this notable year closed with honour; for in the early winter the questionings of the spring were silenced, and Tennyson was finally appointed Laureate, the warrant being dated November 19th. His formal installation took place on the 6th of March 1851; and his first appearance at Court was made in Rogers's Court dress, borrowed for the occasion.

Wordsworth, it is said, had worn the same suit, and both poets had dressed at Rogers's house before the ceremony.

The appointment of Tennyson to the Laureateship was viewed at the time with approbation; indeed, during the discussion of the preceding months the Press had very generally agreed that his genius singled him out as the man most fitted to the post. In the light of later knowledge this opinion seems inevitable; but we have to remember that in 1850 Tennyson's work was represented by but two volumes of poems and 'The Princess.' Almost the whole of his most characteristic work was written after his acceptance of the Laureateship, and in the very moment of his promotion he published a poem which established his position upon a new and permanent basis.

'In Memoriam,' the poem upon which Tennyson had been occupied for some ten years or more, may be divided for purposes of analysis into five parts, but the whole poem is continuous and connected. The connection is, in places, a little difficult to trace, and the course of thought obscure, but—though the mind breaks, with each new division, into a new field of reflection,—turning, as it were, abruptly into a fresh channel,—the course from point to point is actually

unbroken. A brief review of the poem will serve to show the development and direction of the argument.

The poet, at the opening, recalls a creed which he had held for law—that out of the troubles of life men may rise to something better than they were before the day of trouble came. But now he finds the creed hard to hold: it is so difficult to return to comfort after loss. He compares his life to a yew-tree among the graves, which, though spring may return for it, as for the whole of nature, presents the same gloomy spectacle with every season. So Sorrow, surveying his life, can find for him no second spring. For now Sorrow is always with him, the 'Priestess in the vaults of Death' round which his memory hovers, never leaving him for a moment. And when he cries out to her, his cry seems a sin; for any words he can utter fall short of the intensity of his suffering. Yet he must cry out, for the effort seems to deaden the pain. To cry out, indeed, is his only comfort; for the common-place expressions of consolation are empty and barren,

'Vacant chaff well meant for grain'

But at times even this comfort fails him; he must feed his sorrow by the actual sight of the places where he used to meet his friend—by forcing on himself the truth of his loss. So he goes to the house where Hallam used to live, and here the loneliness of it all breaks in upon him with renewed force. The whole scene is melancholy.

'He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.'

Standing desolate, he compares himself to a lover who has hastened to his love's home to find her away. And from the absence his mind glides to the home-coming; he pictures the ship that is bringing Arthur's body to England. He fancies the course of its passage, and himself watching for the first sight of it. Then he remembers that Arthur is returning, but only as a memory. He must fix that fact upon his brain,—only as a memory. But the thought will not take root. He feels that, if Arthur were to step ashore alive, he should not be surprised.

'If one should bring me this report,
That thou hadst touched the land to-day,
And I went down unto the quay,
And found thee lying in the port;

. . . .

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half-divine;
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

. . . .

I should not feel it to be strange.'

Suddenly a storm rises; and he begins to wonder whether his sorrow is like the sea in a tempest,—taking different aspects, now calm, now wild: changed upon the surface, but the same in its silent depth. As the storm passes, he sees the ship near the landing: it arrives with its precious freight, and the burial follows. Then he knows that Arthur is really gone from him for ever. As his grief breaks out afresh with the thought, friends press round him, reproving him; but he feels that they never knew his friend as he did. They cannot understand. He recalls the

years of their friendship: he remembers, too, that there were sorrows to overcloud it.

> 'If all was good and fair we met,
> This earth had been the Paradise
> It never look'd to human eyes
> Since our first Sun arose and set.'

But with all its troubles, it was a life worth living: and for the sake of what has been, and for a proof of the strength of their love, he will find it worth living still. He has the memory to live with:

> ''Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.'

With this the first division of the poem ends: and the scene changes to a view of the life which he has determined to live out alone. It is Christmas Eve, the year of Hallam's death; and the family are at Somersby. They feel the pain of keeping Christmas without Arthur—a Christmas

> 'Which brings no more a welcome guest
> To enrich the threshold of the night
> With shower'd largess of delight
> In dance and song and game and jest.'

And the poet wonders what his friend is doing now, and chafes to think how little his sympathy can picture the life beyond the grave. Lazarus returned from death; but there is no record of the four days spent in the unseen world. 'How is it, then? Is there a life beyond?' Even if there is not, we have Love with us now. Let us at least cherish that.

Then the Muse of Heaven speaks to him 'with darken'd brow,' upbraiding him for prating of things he cannot understand; and the poet's Muse pleads

with her for pardon, if she has ventured too far upon holy ground.

Then the New Year breaks, full of weariness. He recurs again to the image of the Yew: as its Spring is but one touch of colour 'at the tips,' so his life sinks back into gloom. And perhaps, he reflects, while his life is sinking back, Arthur's is advancing: so that if they were to meet, he would find something strange in his friend. But he banishes the thought.

'I vex my heart with fancies dim:
He still outstript me in the race;
It was but unity of place
That made me dream I rank'd with him.'

So, when they meet again, the old love, he assures himself, will return. They will have remembered all the while. And yet—

'How fares it with the happy dead?'

Do they forget old associations and old loves? It may be so for a time; but, when the veil is swept away, they will remember again.

'There no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past.'

This, at least, one must hold, whatever school of thought, whatever creed, one follows; for all creeds and schools are only shadows of the Truth. And so the poet cries to his friend to be near him, as he passes through these shadows of doubt and argument, pointing him always to the light of eternity.

But yet he hesitates.

'Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?'

If he were to meet Arthur, would not his friend find things in him that distressed him? We cannot tell: we can only hope and stretch out 'lame hands of faith.' Meanwhile, all Nature seems to waste itself: the riddle of the struggle for existence is beyond man's understanding.

And here the second division ends on a note of doubt and extreme discomfort.

From this point he strives to teach his trial patience. Sorrow shall be to him a wedded wife, to be loved calmly and evenly, not with the feverish passion of a lover for his mistress.

And yet Arthur, now tutored to the lore of eternal life, must think his friend but a low and puny thing, as he cries after him in the silence. If that be so, let Arthur forget him.

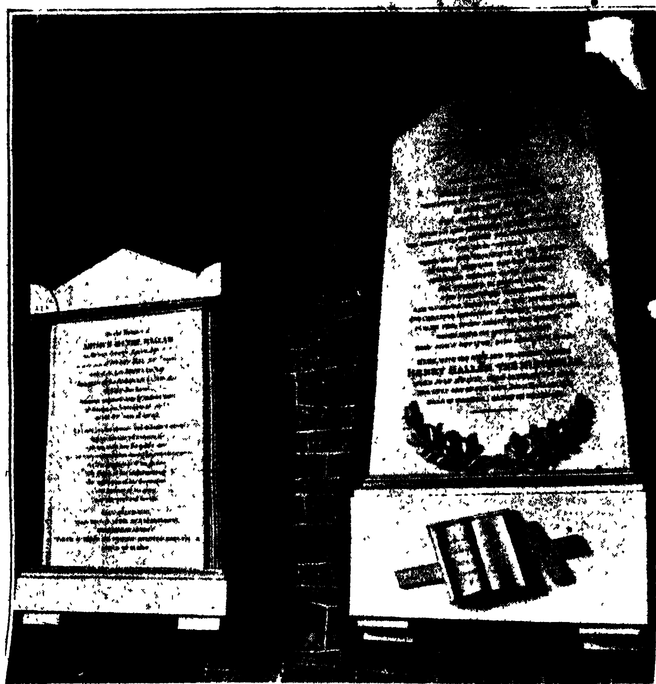
'Then be my love an idle tale,
And fading legend of the past.'

And again he wonders:

'Does my old friend remember me?

It cannot be otherwise, he reflects. Love cannot forget. The certainty of this remembrance comforts him: and in the night he pictures the tablet to Arthur in Clevedon Church, with the moonlight upon it, and so falls asleep to dream of his friend. When he wakes, it is the anniversary of Hallam's death, and the morning is wild with a storm. The memory of his loss floods in upon him anew, but with a comforting

reflection. There are 'so many worlds, so much to do,' that perhaps Arthur was needed elsewhere to fulfil God's order. It might well be so, he thinks, for Arthur was worthy of the call.



THE HALLAM MEMORIAL TABLET.

With this thought the third division of the poem closes.

The fourth part opens with another Christmas Eve, and this time the gathering is less gloomy:

> 'As in the winters left behind
> Again our ancient games had place,
> The mimic picture's breathing grace,
> And dance and song and hoodman-blind.'

And the poet, looking on the glad scene, asks whether

the regret for Arthur's death has died out, and answers that it is not dead, since he is always remembering him. He reflects that a longer life was needed to such a love:

> 'More years had made mc love thee more.'

And then, with an invocation to the New Year, the poet pictures what the new years would have brought had Arthur lived. His fancy conjures up the possible events of such a time, until he suddenly recalls the fact of his loss. Then, leaving such vain dreams, he goes back into the past, recalls the life at Cambridge and at Somersby: and, remembering everything, assures himself that Arthur would be welcome could he return. But he never can return: the poet will never see him again. It needs a strength and purity beyond man's power to live once more with the dead.

> 'How pure at heart and sound in head,
> With what divine affections bold,
> Should be the man whose thought would hold
> An hour's communion with the dead.'

They can never meet except in memory: and so his mind travels back to Somersby again, and thence to Vienna, where Arthur died. Every corner in the house reminds him of his friend, but even the house must be left. The day has come for giving up Somersby.

> 'We leave the well-beloved place
> Where first we gazed upon the sky.'

But before he goes, he walks in the garden with two spirits, who speak with him. One represents the early boyish love of home: the other, the later love of

home illumined by his love for Arthur (this definition of the spirits is the poet's own). Then he goes away: and in a strange place he hears the Christmas bells, and with the old year leaves the old life behind. The bells that ring in the new year, ring in faith and hope and consolation.

'Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.'

The fifth and last part begins with Arthur's birthday, an anniversary which recalls to him the character and life of his friend, at home and at Cambridge. And, as he thinks of his friend's virtues, the Spring breaks, and the season reminds him of the new birth and growth of these virtues in the new life beyond. And so, with resignation at his heart, he returns to the house where his friend had lived, and the view is no longer gloomy.

'I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee.'

The doubt is over, and his soul is at ease.

'Not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death.'

And in his final resignation he knows that, though he die himself, he will not lose his friend; that their love is eternal, through the eternity of

'Faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.'

Such is a naked outline of the poem, which may, perhaps, serve to show the general line of the thought, and the gradual struggle of doubt and faith. It takes no account of the prefatory poem and the epilogue, since they stand outside the scheme of the work. The first is a confession of faith, excusing the doubt: the second is a marriage ode written for the wedding of his sister Cecilia to Edmund Law Lushington. It has but little connection with 'In Memoriam.'

The main work is rich in beauties. A more logical and sustained effort of mental analysis has seldom enriched poetry; the complete progress of sorrow into consolation is followed with a faithfulness which is actually merciless. The poet spares to show no phase of his passion: every new sensation is exposed, questioned, and criticised. And the analysis is conveyed through the medium of a metre exactly adapted to the subject: a metre, the even cadence of whose course rises and falls like the sighing of a melancholy wind among the branches. The language is polished and chaste: the expression, even in the most passionate utterances, is refined and subdued. The result is a poem of unusual beauty, of a sustained literary excellence of the first class, which fails on but one note—the note of emotion.

No poem of Tennyson's is so apt for quotation, none is so rich in phrases that have long since become household words. But it will probably be always read and remembered for special passages rather than for the strength and unity of its argument. It is natural it should be so: for 'In Memoriam' is much too long for its subject. The thought that animates

it, while it progresses and develops systematically, is diffused and weakened by repetition, and the struggle between doubt and faith is extended over too large an area. The poem suffers also from another misfortune, which is common to all work of this kind: there is everywhere a suggestion of artificiality. The failing was inevitable. When sorrow tries to fix its record upon paper it becomes analytic, introspective; it begins to criticise itself, and so ceases to be sorrow. There are emotions which literature cannot stereotype: directly the attempt is made, the emotion passes into self-analysis. This is a misfortune which 'In Memoriam' must share even with 'Lycidas' and 'Adonais': pure emotion of the strongest and most human elements can never be recorded. It spends itself in the abandonment to the passion of the moment: when it begins to record its sensation, it has lost the keenness and sting of its agony. It becomes, then, the luxury of a mind living in the past: it has ceased to live in the present. And being reflective and analytic, it is the result of an effort, the exercise of an energy: in other words, an artificial product. The more beautiful its finish, the more obvious its artificiality: and every step it takes towards Art is a step further from Nature. The more we borrow from the brain the less we owe to the heart.

CHAPTER VII

MAUD

His elevation to the Laureateship gave a natural impetus to the sale of Tennyson's work, and in 1851 no less than three new issues appeared. The *Poems* ran into a seventh edition, which was enriched by four new pieces,—'To the Queen,' 'Edwin Morris,' 'The Eagle,' and the lines 'Come not when I am dead.' A fourth edition of 'The Princess' was also needed, and in this issue the incident of the Prince's 'weird seizures' made its first appearance: there were also alterations in the first and fourth songs. 'In Memoriam,' too, was printed in a fourth edition of five thousand copies (three editions having been exhausted within the first year), and the section 'O sorrow, wilt thou live with me' (LIX.), was added for the first time. During the same year Tennyson published the stanzas, 'What time I wasted youthful hours,' in Miss Power's *Keepsake*, in which annual the lines 'Come not when I am dead' were also included.

The first of these is eminently above the level of *Keepsake* verse, and invites quotation:

'What time I wasted youthful hours,
One of the shining winged powers
Show'd me vast cliffs, with crowns of towers.'

This is like an echo from 'Timbuctoo'; but the spiritual city which now burst into view was fairer

than the hidden region of Africa. It was a city peopled by the spirits of just-men made perfect, whose gates are open to the fearless.

> 'He said, "The labour is not small.
> Yet winds the pathway free to all:—
> Take care thou dost not fear to fall."'

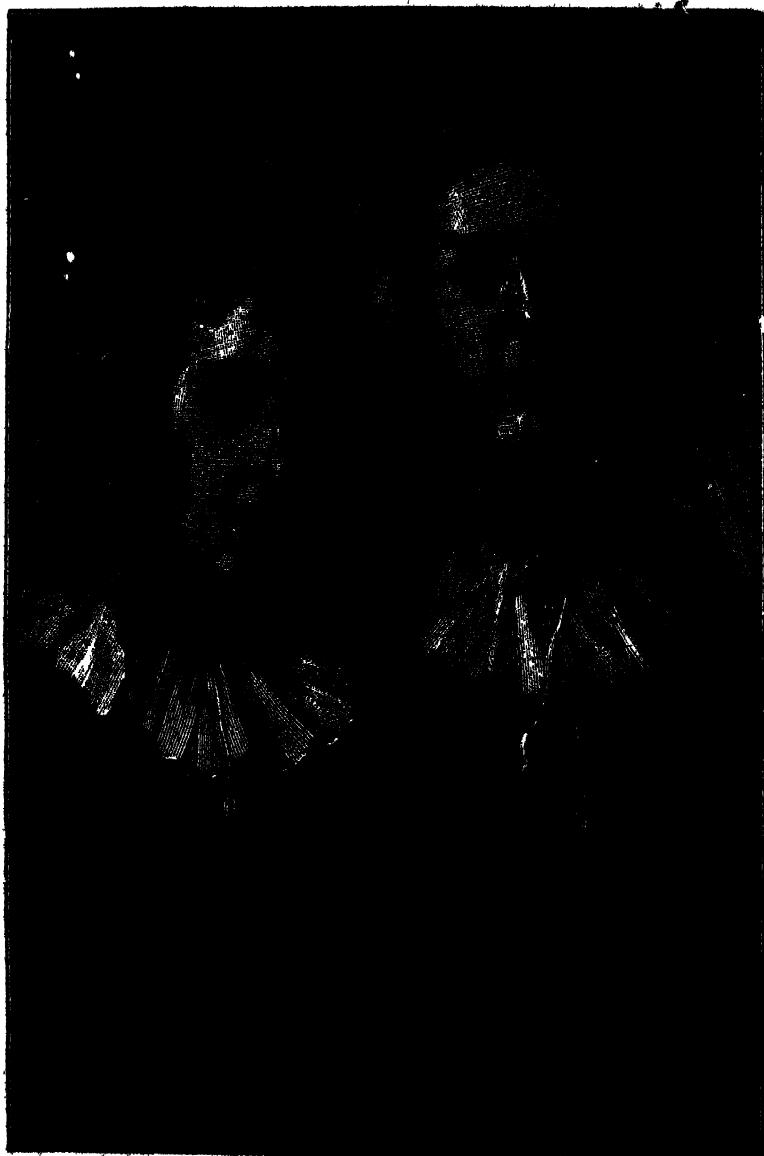
This poem, it is to be hoped, will eventually be reprinted with the rest of Tennyson's work.

His one other literary performance this year was dedicated to a grateful occasion. In February a farewell banquet was given to W. C. Macready, the famous actor, and at this dinner John Forster recited Tennyson's sonnet to the guest of the evening. The lines were printed in *The Household Narrative of Current Events*, in *The People's Journal*, and in most of the current newspapers. They have since been included in his collected works.

But the year which brought so many gains brought its loss as well. 'Tennyson and his wife,' Carlyle wrote to Emerson, 'are in Italy. Their baby died.' It was this journey that Tennyson recounted so tenderly in 'The Daisy.' But before that was written, the loss had been repaired by their son Hallam's birth.

> 'So dear a life your arms enfold,
> Whose crying is a cry for gold.'

While abroad they visited Cogoletto, Florence, Reggio, Parma, Milan, and Como The Brownings caught a glimpse of them at the Louvre, but only from a distance. This was in the autumn, and by Christmas the poet and his wife had returned to London, where FitzGerald found him looking 'pretty well.' The journey to Italy is connected with one amusing



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HON. HALLAM AND LIONEL TENNYSON.

After the picture by G. F. Watts, R.A.

incident. Lord John Russell gave a large reception, to which the Tennysons were invited; and during the evening the Prime Minister, moving from guest to guest, encountered the Laureate. They immediately broke into conversation, Lord John asking Tennyson how he had enjoyed his visit to Venice. As the poet did not appear communicative, his host pressed him further, when he confessed that he had *not* liked Venice.

'And why not, pray, Mr. Tennyson?'

'I couldn't get any English tobacco there for love or money,' replied the poet.

The Tennysons were now at Twickenham, rapidly making new friends. Sir Henry Taylor, who was quartered at Mortlake, was particularly pleased with his neighbour, whom he regarded as 'a singular compound of manliness and helplessness, manly in his simplicity.' He admired the work no less than the man: 'I should think he is the only really popular poet since Byron, except Wordsworth, for some ten years of his life.' But Henry Taylor seems to have shared the view of Horne, that Tennyson's future work was unlikely to prove much stronger than his actual achievement. 'I do not anticipate,' he wrote to Sir Edmund Head, 'that he will take any such place in poetry as is filled by Coleridge or Wordsworth; but I think that his poetry will be felt to be admirable in its kind.'

In 1852 the poet's attention was chiefly confined to national and political subjects, the four poems which he printed being all of a public character. *The Examiner* for January 31st contained, 'Britons,

guard your own,' and in the next month he published 'The Third of February 1852,'—an outcome of Louis Napoleon's move towards an absolute government,—and 'Hands all Round,' which appeared together on February 7th. All these poems were printed anonymously, over the signature 'Merlin'; and have since been acknowledged his. On the fourteenth of February, however, over the signature 'Taliessin' there was presented a copy of verses opening.

'How much I love this writer's manly style,'

the authorship of which has not been generally known. FitzGerald's papers contained them in Tennyson's MS., together with another poem, 'Where is he, the simple Fool,' which was printed in a newspaper at the time, but never included in Tennyson's collected works.

During the early spring he was at Malvern with his wife, in daily communication with the Carlyles and Sydney Dobell (the founder of the Spasmodic School of Poetry, and author of 'The Roman,' and 'Balder'), who spent the greater part of his life in business in Gloucestershire. In August, Hallam Tennyson was born; and on September 29 we find Frederick Denison Maurice writing to Charles Kingsley:

'I hope to be in London on Tuesday: Alfred Tennyson has done me the high honour of asking me to be the godfather to his child, who is to be baptized on that day. I accept the office with thankfulness and fear.'

The offer was made with gratitude and esteem. Tennyson wished his son to be able to say, in the years to come, 'My father asked Mr. Maurice to be my godfather, because he was the truest Christian

he knew in the world.' Thackeray was also present at the christening.

The closing months of 1852 are rendered memorable to students of Tennyson by the death of the Duke of Wellington and the publication of the Laureate's Ode. The first draft, which was probably thrown off in necessary haste, appeared as a sixteen-page pamphlet bearing the imprint of Edward Moxon. The Press was very ill contented with the Ode; and, when a second edition appeared in the next year, it had been considerably emended. The main alterations, which distinguish the poem in its present stage from the first edition, are the addition of a few lines to stanzas I. and II., and of the passages about Lisbon in the sixth stanza. The seventh has been considerably corrected and amplified, the additions including the whole passage from

'On God and Godlike men we build our trust'

to

'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.'

The Forster Library contains a copy of the first edition with the corrections made in the second, written in in Forster's own handwriting. The Ode occasioned a pleasant interchange of courtesies between Sir Henry Taylor and the poet. 'I have read your Ode,' wrote the former, 'and I feel that many thousands in future times will feel about it as I do, or with a yet stronger and deeper feeling. . . . It has a greatness worthy of its theme, and an absolute simplicity and truth, with all the poetic passion of your nature moving beneath.' To which Tennyson replied in his downright, genuine strain:

'Thanks! Thanks! In the all but universal depreciation of my Ode by the Press, the prompt and hearty approval of it by a man as true as the Duke himself is doubly grateful.'

One hesitates, however, to share Henry Taylor's honest enthusiasm. The Ode has a grand, solemn movement, advancing, as it were, to the tolling of the funeral bell, and sweeping on to the swell of the organ. But it is ornate rather than inspired, with more study than sincerity to commend it. The lines in it which are deathless, lines such as

'Not once or twice in our rough island-story
The path of duty was the way to glory,'

or

'This is England's greatest son,
He that gained a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun,'

are overweighted by the mass of rhetoric which encumbers them. There is everywhere too much decoration, too little simplicity. In his public odes Tennyson is never easy; he always appears to pose, to assume a sentiment foreign to him, and to feel himself that it is alien. The most enduring poetry is never written to order.

The next year, the last at Twickenham, saw an eighth edition of the *Poems* with but a few new pieces added. The 'Lines' to 'E. L.' (Edward Lear), referring to that author's *Journals of Tours in Central and South Italy and Albania*, were new, the poem 'To the Queen' had been emended, and 'A Dream of Fair Women' had now received the poet's finishing touches. This poem was, perhaps, as much touched and retouched as any Tennyson ever wrote,

and the corrections are almost without exception improvements. The 'Dream,' in its original shape, has a few crudities and unpolished corners which are strangely foreign to Tennyson's genius: in its finished form it is so delicately elaborated as to be in parts even obtrusively artificial. But the over-elaboration is atoned for by the proportion and concentration of the whole.

Meanwhile the making of new friends did not imply forgetfulness of the old. FitzGerald was with the Tennysons during their last days at Twickenham: and in the quiet of their later home in the Isle of Wight, whither they moved in 1853, they were mindful of old acquaintances for whom life was more eventful. Frederick Denison Maurice, having been expelled from King's College, offered during the first weeks of 1854 to resign his position as Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn,—a delicate step which the Benchers begged him to reconsider. And among the many letters of sympathy which he received none was more tender and genial than the Laureate's, in which he pressed him to forget his trouble for the moment in a visit to his old friends and his new godson. Whewell considered the poem the most perfect of its kind which he had ever encountered.

'Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
  Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight;

. . . .

Come, Maurice, come: the lawn as yet
Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet;
  But when the wreath of March has blossom'd,
Crocus, anemone, violet,

Or later, pay one visit here,
For those are few we hold as dear;
Nor pay but one, but come for many,
Many and many a happy year.'

It was the same dislike of disagreement in tenet and doctrine that moved Tennyson to write a warm letter of welcome to Bishop Colenso, at the time when the narrower minds among the clergy were fuming against him,—a letter in which he begged the Bishop to come and stay with him as long as he liked. The



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poet's faith was strong enough and high enough to despise controversy over detail, and difference in degree. The breadth of his intellect admitted a breadth of sympathy. Once, in a letter to Mr. Bosworth Smith, written on December 12, 1885, he expressed a vigorous disapproval of Disestablishment. 'I believe,' he said, 'that the disestablishment and

disendowment of the Church would prelude the downfall of much that is greatest and best in England.' But he had always some sympathy for minds at variance with his own. 'I am no Chartist,' he wrote to Mr. Ernest Jones, 'but I heartily sympathise with your sufferings in a cause which you have deemed good, notwithstanding.'

For politics Tennyson had little inclination. When, in 1880, he was offered the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University, he declined the honour on learning that he was put forward as the candidate of the Conservative party. He was unwilling, he said, to stand as the representative of any single school of politics. Everything human was congenial to him: he had no heart for dissension. Indeed, with his disposition to retirement, Tennyson combined a most sympathetic faculty of passing out of himself into the interests and achievements of others. The affections of his own home-life never actually estranged him, as FitzGerald hinted, from the consideration of his friends: the concentration upon his own work never blinded him to merit in another's. On the contrary, his appreciation of the literary work of his time was so keen as sometimes to overleap his critical judgment. During 1853 the world of letters was stirred by the performances of a poet, now little remembered, named Alexander Smith, a pattern-designer in a Glasgow factory, who published several volumes of poetry which had an unusually popular vogue. Imitating, perhaps unconsciously, Keats and Tennyson himself, he achieved a conspicuous facility for melodious and graceful verse, so fluent and self-contained that it is

only on a careful examination that the reader discovers, despite occasional brilliance, the want of real power and individuality which deprives the work of permanent value. The music and grace of Smith's verse took London by storm. Charles Kingsley, even, was so blinded by the brilliance of his coming, as to write a paper in *Fraser's Magazine*, in which, while he pleaded for a less critical enthusiasm for a writer who was not without limitation, he still granted that Smith was a greater poet than Keats. And in 1853, when 'A Life Drama,' Smith's principal poem, appeared, Tennyson in his turn wrote to the author, expressing his enjoyment and admiration of the work. There was a pathetic melody in his verse; and, in certain poems, such as his 'Glasgow,' a sincerity that naturally appealed to sympathy. But his best work was done in prose; and in the pages of the *Athenæum* a very careful student of poetry, afterwards known to be William Allingham, attacked the poet with the charge of plagiarism. The sequel was an oblivion which was, it may be, an excess in reaction. For with his melody, his colour, and his borrowed distinction, Alexander Smith had perhaps greater claims to attention than some popular poets of our own more critical generation.

Another contemporary poet of whom Tennyson expressed approval was Thomas Lovell Beddoes. During the Laureate's honeymoon, when he was staying in the Lake-country, Miss Zoë King lent him a copy of the posthumous *Death's Jest-Book*, and wrote in high delight, when Tennyson returned the volume 'with a few lines in which he rated the work

highly.' He had even higher praise for FitzGerald's 'Euphranor,' a Platonic dialogue dealing with Cambridge life, which was published in 1851. The concluding passage, which describes a night of the May races, was declared by Tennyson to be the finest piece of modern prose he had ever read. After a stirring scene recounting the boat-race, which is scarcely more vivid, however, than a similar description in 'Tom Brown at Oxford,' the book closes with these words:

'We walked home across the meadows that lie between the river and the town, whither the dusky troops of gownsmen were evaporating, while twilight gathered over all, and the nightingale began to be heard among the flowering chestnuts of Jesus.'

It is pictorial prose enough: but in no way singular. The sentiment and the association of the scene, no doubt, endeared the passage to Tennyson, who, in his impulsive, generous fashion, said rather more in its praise than he wished even his friends to understand. Enthusiasm and the patriotic spirit of University life cannot be taken too seriously.

At the end of 1853 the Tennysons left Twickenham for the Isle of Wight; and in the following year was born Lionel, their second son, who afterwards married a daughter of Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson (subsequently Mrs. Augustine Birrell). The same year found another Tennyson among the poets, Frederick, Alfred's elder brother, publishing in 1854 his first volume of verse, *Days and Hours*.

The move to a pleasanter climate and more comfortable quarters seems to have impressed Tennyson's friends with an appreciation of his worldly comforts.

'Our poets,' wrote Procter to J. T. Fields, are all going to the poorhouse—except Tennyson.' And while the Tennysons were moving southward to their secluded island home, the poet's memory was receiving a strange tribute in the north. The Arctic explorers, sighting at sea a tapering pillar standing with its natural pedestal to a height of over seven hundred feet, put in to shore to take note of it, and Dr. Kane, one of their number, suggested that they should christen it 'Tennyson's Pillar.' And so it has been named ever since. The doctor's impression of the scene may be given in his own words:

'I was still more struck with another (rock) of the same sort, in the immediate neighbourhood of my halting-ground beyond Sunny Gorge, to the north of latitude 79°. A single cliff of greenstone, marked by the slaty limestone that once encased it, rears itself from a crumbled base of sandstones, like the boldly-chiselled rampart of an ancient city. At its northern extremity, on the brink of a deep ravine which has worn its way among the ruins, there stands a solitary column or minaret-tower, as sharply finished as if it had been cast for the Place Vendôme. Yet the length of the shaft alone is four hundred and eighty feet; and it rises on a plinth or pedestal itself two hundred and eighty feet high. I remember well the emotions of my party as it first broke upon our view. Cold and sick as I was, I brought back a sketch of it, which may have interest for the reader, though it scarcely suggests the imposing dignity of this magnificent landmark. Those who are happily familiar with the writings of Tennyson, and have communed with his spirit in the solitudes of a wilderness, will apprehend the impulse that inscribed the scene with his name.'

Army and Navy were to remember the Laureate,

and the name that was not forgotten among the ice-floes was to inspire the hard-pressed forces in the trenches of the Crimea. It was during 1854 that 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' appeared in *The Examiner* for Saturday, December the 9th: and in the following August a thousand copies of it were printed on a quarto sheet to be distributed among the troops before Sebastopol. The poem has become almost too popular for discussion; it is the one stirring, galloping piece of energy which all shades of mind and sympathy seem to admire alike. There is a sound of horses' hoofs and a clatter of accoutrements in the melody that brings its own reply to the critics who find Tennyson a dilettante and a dreamer alone.

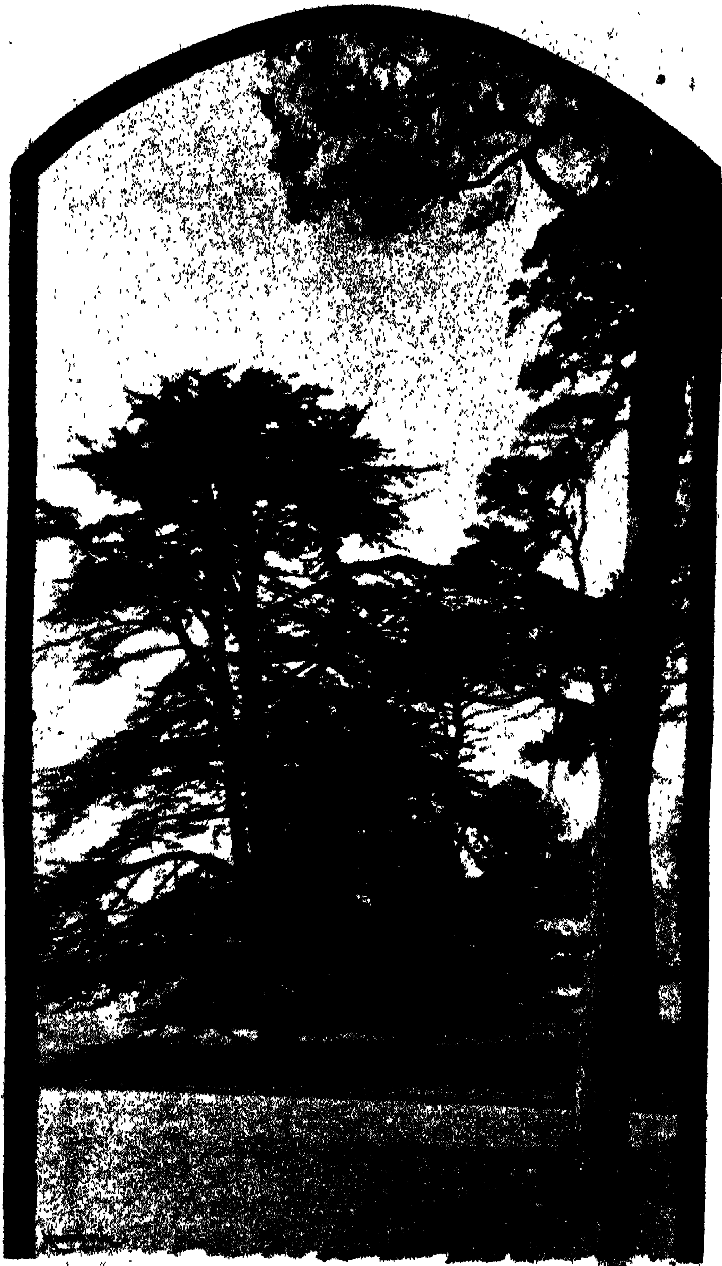
The present year (1855) has, however, more important claims to our attention than the song of the battle-field, in that it saw the publication of 'Maud,' the greater part of which was written in Sir John Simeon's garden at Swainston. The poet used to sit at work under the shade of a spreading cedar on the lawn, and the view which peeped through its branches doubtless suggested many of the touches in the garden scene of 'Maud.'

The history of 'Maud' is singular. No poem of Tennyson's evoked more heated discussion at its first appearance; none has lived down depreciation with such full effect and dignity.

The volume, which took its name from the principal poem, contained also *The Brook, The Letters, The Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington, The Daisy, Lines to F. D. Maurice, Will*, and *The Charge of the Light Brigade.*

Several of the shorter poems in the volume have already been discussed; among the others the most noteworthy are 'The Brook' and 'The Daisy.' 'The Letters' is a very simple little story, told in polished, but not very animated verse. 'Will' is a trifle didactic, and at the same time incomplete. But 'The Brook' may rank with 'Dora' and 'The Gardener's Daughter' as a fresh, scented idyll of the country-side, through which sings and quivers the voice of the stream as it babbles over its stones. The trembling music of its flow is echoed to perfection in the melody of the verse: nothing more delicately natural is to be found in poetry. 'The Daisy,' already referred to in another context, is a tender dream of the poet, musing in a murky street in Edinburgh over a daisy picked on the 'snowy Splugen,' and gives him opportunity for many varied sketches of Southern life, full of colour and spirit and movement. It is a little picture-gallery of foreign views.

But it was 'Maud' that gave the character to the volume. The poem grew, as every one knows, out of Sir John Simeon's remark that the lines 'O that 'twere possible' required some concomitant interest to explain their force. The verses, long set aside in the miscellany where they first appeared, were read to Sir John Simeon by the author during the early days of their friendship, after the Tennysons' removal to Farringford. Doubtless his friend begged of the poet the recital of some of his less-remembered verses, and was struck at once by the pity of their oblivion. At any rate, on his suggestion Tennyson founded 'Maud,' and its appearance was followed by a storm



THE CEDAR UNDER WHICH 'MAUD' WAS WRITTEN. *At p. 142*

of controversy. *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The National Review* both noticed the poem unfavourably, and *The Edinburgh Review* published a long rigmarole of dissatisfaction. The writer of the last article compared 'Maud' to 'St. Simeon Stylites,' considering that both have the serious defect of leaving the reader in a painful state of confusion as to the limits of the sane and the insane; complaining, too, of a want of distinct conception in the whole work. The critique is an instructive one, because a careful study of it reveals the fact that the writer was conscious of something wanting in 'Maud,' but was unable to define the need. He seems all through his review to be half an admirer in spite of himself, to be staggered by the lawlessness of the metre and the audacity of the subject. The truth was that 'the public wanted other notes' from Tennyson. People could not understand this outburst of passion, this strange melancholy and morbidity: above all, they failed to grasp the dramatic character of the poem. Sentiments which the poet had put into the mouth of his principal actor were interpreted as his own; and the final passages of the work, especially—those, namely, referring to the Crimean War—caused the gravest offence to the less intelligent section of his readers. An anonymous poet ('A Poet of the People' he dubbed himself) published through an obscure house in Holles Street, Cavendish Square, a vulgar little travesty entitled 'Anti-Maud,' which destroyed by the grossness of its taste a certain merit which it manifested in its assumption of the Laureate's style. In this strain he ass[illegible]ed the concluding passages:

Who is it clamours for War? Is it one who is ready to fight?
Is it one who will grasp the sword, and rush on the foe with a shout?
Far from it :—'tis one of the musing mind who merely intends to write—
He sits at home by his own snug hearth, and hears the storm howl without.'

Nor was this the only enemy in the gate. A volume called *Modern Manicheism, Labour's Utopia, and other Poems*, contained a set of verses 'Vindiciae Pacis,' addressed to Tennyson with a like expostulation :

'What though you are jesting—shall this your childish perverseness excuse?
Rather all the more insult it is for your vexed and recalcitrant muse,
And she all the less calmly endures that you bid her your ravings dispense,
That simply because they are yours, there are blockheads who take them for sense.'

The author of this book, who voluminously described himself on the title page as—

'A Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not,'

is generally supposed to have been Mr. W. T. Thornton, of the India Office, who was born about 1830, and wrote a number of books, both poetical and political, including a translation of the Odes of Horace.

And then a champion spoke for the poet; a Dr. Mann wrote a 'Tennyson's "Maud" Vindicated,'—a thin shilling pamphlet in a brown paper cover, which was good enough to win a sympathetic word of approval from the Laureate himself. 'Your commentary,'

he said, 'is as true as it is full.' Sydney Dobell, too, was anxious to plead for the excellence of the poem, and papers were found at his death containing notes for a reply to the unfriendly criticisms which 'Maud' had encountered. And yet another voice was raised on Tennyson's behalf in the little volume of poems *Ionica*, published some three years after 'Maud.' Among the treasures of this unpretentious casket was a copy of verses written 'after reading "Maud,"' which reasons with Tennyson's critics in a tone of calm contempt.

'Leave him to us, ye good and sage,
Who stiffen in your middle age.
Ye loved him once, but now forbear;
Yield him to those who hope and dare,
And have not yet to forms consigned
A rigid, ossifying mind.'

Still, it is not surprising that 'Maud' should have puzzled its commentators at first, for both subject and treatment were bold and unconventional; and it is apt to be the ordinary only that meets with immediate recognition. 'Maud' was anything rather than ordinary. Tennyson had dared to choose for himself a new type of hero, and one that alarmed the public taste. The central character of the poem, the speaker, seemed at first to repel sympathy. He is a young man of a morbid temperament, early estranged from the careless banquet of life by the sad death, or suicide, of his father; and gradually separating himself from the thought and tenor of his surroundings. The age of peace into which he is born seems to him an age of falsehood, everything in his world is out of joint.

'Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
When the poor are hovelled and hustled together, each sex, like swine,
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;
Peace in her vineyard—yes—but a company forges the wine.'

He is sick of the Hall and the Hill, when suddenly the family from the big house return, and with them Maud, the daughter of the home. He falls in love with her from the first; we know that from the moment he begins to protest. Love's first emotion is always an attempt at self-deceit.

'Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,'

he finds her; but when he takes care to insist on the wholeness of his heart, we can see the hidden wound. And so when he meets her, he bows, and thinks her proud. He is already troubled at her want of notice for him. He is poor, he knows it, and she is rich; and he consoles his need of her with a smug reflection.

'Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet for a wife,
. . . .
You have but fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life.'

But he hangs about the hall, nevertheless, and when he hears her sing, he is aflame. Her exquisite face and wild voice claim him altogether; he can keep his secret from himself no longer. He meets her, and she makes him

'Divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.'

Now he is given over to his passion; but he cherishes it chiefly for its delicious melancholy. It is a comfort to him to nurse his solitude and be sorry for his weakness.

'Ah! What shall I be at fifty,
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?'

And yet, if she could love him, he thinks, her smile might make the bitter sweet. This is the very ecstasy of love: an unhealthy, effeminate passion, rejoicing in the analysis of its morbidity. It only needs jealousy to complete its misery; and jealousy comes to its aid. He sees her with another—

> 'A lord, a captain, a padded shape,
> A bought commission, a waxen face,
> A rabbit mouth that is ever agape.'

And the pain gathers at his heart. But in his most contemptible moment he feels that he is to be despised.

> 'Ah for a man to arise in me,'

he cries,

> 'That the man I am may cease to be!'

Suddenly his jealousy seems ungrounded. He meets her: he kisses her hand: he is happy for one moment. The next he is despondent; her brother has scorned him, cut him

> 'With a stony British stare,'

and the sensitive temperament glows with indignation. There follows a reaction, for he tells her of his love. She encourages him, and his world is May.

> 'Go not, happy day,
> From the shining fields,
> Go not, happy day,
> Till the maiden yields.
> Rosy is the West,
> Rosy is the South,
> Roses are her lips,
> And a rose her mouth.'

Then, like a blight on their love, the brother returns to the hall and finds Maud and her lover in the garden. There is a heated discussion, and the

brother strikes him before the other man, the lord of whose suit he was afraid. A duel follows, and the brother falls with the generous cry, 'The fault was mine.' The lover rushes to the Breton coast to feed his sorrow with memory. Remembrance eats into his brain; and that way madness lies. In impotent frenzy he cries out to the world around him; everything human is hateful to him. But with the end the morbid spirit passes. He becomes manlike again. Like the hero of 'Locksley Hall' he turns once more to the life of action, to the interests of his country, the glory of prowess, and

'The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire

The weird storm and stress of the ravings are dramatic beyond anything that Tennyson has clothed in more dramatic form. It is strange that a writer, who could throw himself so prodigally into the unrestrained emotion of his character, should not have succeeded more fully in his attempts towards stage-drama. The ghastly horror of the lines that follow can scarcely be matched :

'O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,
Me, that never was a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half dead,
Then I cannot be wholly dumb;
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper'

They are only the Philistine and the dilettante who complain that such a subject is unfit for art. Art claims for her own every subject that she can illumine:



SOMERSBY RECTORY.

At p. 4

the work only, fails in art when it is content with a sordid photography, or a smug, puritanical concealment that only serves to express what it would hide. It is here that realism fails, on the one side; and on the other, the pseudo-idealism, which is nothing but a slavery to the conventional. No phase of life is denied to art, if she bestows upon it her perfect work; and the hand that would tear 'Maud' from literature can scarcely avoid the emasculation of 'King Lear.'

Another school of criticism, busying itself with 'Maud,' has taken the poem to task for its unevenness and its want of scheme; but blame like this is grievously blind in its effort to be critical. For the unevenness and the want of scheme in 'Maud' are the very elements which constitute its dramatic quality: the poem is uneven and restless because the mind it pourtrays is restless. The sudden, unexplained transitions from sentiment to sentiment form the exact analysis of the morbid, uneasy mind, groping after its own content. The critical foot-rule cannot measure 'Maud,' finding so many cubits to be added to its stature before it can attain artistic unity. For it does attain artistic unity in its fearless presentment of unrest, in its perfect appreciation of the life creeping on broken wing towards the cells of madness and fear.

As an example of a very general estimate of 'Maud,' it is interesting to observe the attitude adopted by Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, in his appreciative review of Tennyson's work in *Victorian Poets.* He says: '"Maud," with its strength and weakness, has divided public opinion more than any other of the author's

works. I think that his judicious students will not demur to my opinion that it is quite below his other sustained productions; rather, that it is not sustained at all, but, while replete with beauties, weak and uneven as a whole, and that this is due to the poet's having gone outside his own nature, and to his surrender of the joy of art, in an effort to produce something that should at once catch the favour of the multitude. 'Maud' is scanty in theme, thin in treatment, poor in thought; but has musical episodes, with much fine scenery and diction. It is a greater medley than 'The Princess,' shifting from vague speculations to passionate outbreaks, and glorying in one famous and beautiful nocturne,—but all intermixed with cheap satire, and conspicuous for affectations unworthy of the poet.'

The whole criticism, to our view, seems based on a misconception of the character and aim of the poem. The unevenness is the result of the dramatic study of mental reaction, following the moods and caprices of the subject. The poet has, indeed, 'gone outside his own nature,' not in order to catch the favour of the multitude, but to adopt with a singular fidelity the instincts and emotion of a character altogether foreign to his own. To compare 'Maud' with 'The Princess' is surely to miss the sense of proportion: the one is a simple fairy tale, the other a study in morbid passion. Mr. Stedman even seems to expect in such a study the classic regularity and unbroken outline of some calm elegy of resignation. Calmness, evenness, sustained effort are not the excellences of 'Maud'; but there are strength, intensity, and dramatic fervour to

fill their place. And it is through these qualities that 'Maud' triumphs. But it has other beauties, too. The study gives the artist his opportunity as well. He can play not only the analyst, but the musician. Nocturne and spring-song, dance and death-march follow one another in swift procession. There is an alternation of key for every change of temperament. It is this harmony of matter and manner, and this dramatic grasp on the subject that give 'Maud' its unique position among Tennyson's works; for the poet here takes a subject altogether unsympathetic, and by the force of his art compels our sympathy. The hope and the doubt, the pang and the passion, become personal sensations as we read; we forget the unhealthy atmosphere in which the speaker moves, for we are moving with him, living his life out by his side. To compel the reader to this sympathy is to prove one's-self a dramatist, and to be truly dramatic is to be a true artist.

So viewed, 'Maud' remains one of the most vivid and artistic poems in the language.

It was always a favourite with the author, who read it to Sir Frederick Pollock at Farringford, and to the Brownings at Dorset Street, during the year of its publication, and has since read many extracts from it on different occasions.

The party at Dorset Street to whom Tennyson read 'Maud' on the 27th of September 1855 was composed of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. While Tennyson was reading, Rossetti made a pen-and-ink sketch of him, which he subsequently re-copied. The original fell

into the hands of Robert Browning; the copy is still preserved by Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse. The picture, above which is written the first line of 'Maud,'

> 'I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,'

represents Tennyson seated on a sofa, in a loose coat and waistcoat, showing a plentiful shirt-front and a black tie. His left hand grasps his foot, which is curiously curled up; in his right he holds a very small 'Maud.' The figure throws a heavy shadow on the wall and the sofa.

A story is told of yet another reading of 'Maud,' when Tennyson turned to a lady at his elbow in the midst of the passage—

> 'Birds in the high Hall-garden
>   When twilight was falling.
> Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
>   They were crying and calling'—

with the question, 'What birds were calling?' The lady, willing to justify her taste for poetry, replied: 'Nightingales, I imagine.' 'Ugh!' said the poet with a shiver; 'what a cockney you are! Do nightingales cry "Maud"? Certainly not. But rooks do: "Caw, caw, caw, caw." It's very like it, at any rate.'

These rough little speeches were thoroughly characteristic of the man; and within the same year Henry Taylor recounts to his wife a very similar crudity. They were discussing at Lady Harriet Ashburton's the constancy of her friendship, the conversation resulting from the attention that lady was bestowing upon Tennyson. Sir Henry Taylor recalled a friend (Professor Goldwin Smith) who, a year ago, had been

the lion of her admiration, and wondered whether she would forget the poet, as she seemed to have forgotten her old friend. The discussion was growing warm, when Tennyson interrupted it. 'By what you say yourself,' he said, 'it appears that you don't show me any particular favours.'

But rougher than all these was his reputed reply to the wife of a Richmond clergyman, who wrote him, no doubt, an exasperating letter, begging him to explain a certain passage in one of his poems, which she had failed to understand. The answer came, brief and brusque—

'DEAR MADAM,

I merely supply poetry to the English people—not brains.'

But his friends always understood that the rough manner concealed a genuine geniality.

It was in the summer of the year of 'Maud' that the University of Oxford conferred on Tennyson the degree of D.C.L., and there is a story that tells how, when the Laureate, with his rough, unkempt hair, moved up the Sheldonian, an undergraduate from the gallery asked him, with impressive earnestness, '*Did* they wake and call you too early this morning?' And Tennyson probably enjoyed the jest as much as any one.

After the momentary outburst of dramatic passion in 'Maud' Tennyson began to occupy himself with calmer themes. He was already busy upon 'Idylls of the King.' In 1857 he printed, for private circulation only, 'Enid and Nimue,' which must have been one

of the first of the series, and presumably dissatisfied its author. At any rate, it was never issued to the public, and during that year he published nothing. His work, meanwhile, was pleasantly interrupted by occasional visits from authors anxious to find in his conversation some reflection of his work.

Bayard Taylor, who walked with him to the Needles on a June afternoon in 1857, left the poet with a lasting impression of the variety and spontaneity of his knowledge. Nathaniel Hawthorne also encountered Tennyson, in company with Mr. Woolner, at the Manchester Exhibition, the date of their meeting being the 30th of July. Hawthorne, with the true native touch of the American, was glad to find the poet 'as un-English as possible . . . softer, sweeter, broader, more simple than' an American. Bayard Taylor carried from Farringford a keen impression of his host's appearance. 'Tall and broad-shouldered,' he found him, 'as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of Southern darkness.'

Prince Albert was an occasional visitor at Farringford also, and on one occasion a new servant, who opened the door to the Prince Consort when the Tennysons were out, and had asked the visitor's name, was horribly awed at finding that she was quietly standing face to face with royalty!

Tennyson was very busy, however; and the friends who came to see him brought the only interruption he allowed to his work. The country people, says Dobell, watching him from an admiring distance, were 'amused at his bad hat,' but impressed with the certainty that he was writing his poetry all the while

he crossed and recrossed his lawn with the mowing-machine. It was so, too, that the little boy of the well-known anecdote pictured him, walking about 'making *poets* for the Queen,' under the stars.

So the next two years passed in the preparation of the 'Idylls,' 1858 eliciting but one contribution from his pen—an addition of two stanzas to the 'National Anthem' on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess-Royal. The poet was busy on his masterpiece. On June 22, 1858, he read to Arthur Hugh Clough certain passages in 'Guinevere,' which was now approaching completion. 'I hear,' wrote FitzGerald to Professor E. B. Cowell, 'that Tennyson goes on with "King Arthur," but I have not seen or heard of him for a long time.' In the following year, however, his friends were to hear of him to the fullest and most gratifying advantage. For in 1859 he published the 'Idylls of the King.'

CHAPTER VIII

IDYLLS OF THE KING

THE 'Idylls of the King,' the most characteristic and perhaps the most permanent of Tennyson's contributions to English literature, have developed gradually, as it were, from the smallest seed to the full flower of poetry. The great English story, the unique romantic charm of which had crossed the path of Dryden to be intercepted by Sir Richard Blackmore, accompanied Tennyson with its fascinations from his earliest youth. 'The Lady of Shalott,' published in the 1832 volume, showed the poet's mind gradually stretching towards its subject, on which it closed with a stronger hold ten years later in 'Sir Galahad' and 'Morte d'Arthur.' 'The Lady of Shalott,' a lyric full of tone and colour, as Tennyson's early lyrics were apt to be, gains especial interest from the faint echo of the later epic which it catches and preserves to us, like the first essay of a mind in a dream as yet unrealised. The hopeless love of the Lady herself, the river journey to towered Camelot, the loveless musing of Lancelot over the body of the maiden dead for love of him—all these things foreshadow the spirit and the mild melancholy which characterise the 'Idylls' themselves. 'Sir Galahad,' with its rich and sumptuous

decoration, its subtle variations of onomatopœia, and its mediæval atmosphere of Catholicism, suggested a more accurate treatment than the theme finally received. 'Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere' contained another development of the subject, and the 'Morte d'Arthur' carried the final plan past its starting-point. Here the mind of the poet seems to have fixed upon the subject and the manner of treatment, and to have perceived the possibilities and capacities of the Arthurian legend. It is a fragment—a broken piece of that epic—'some twelve books'—which his Everard had burned; but it is something more than a faint Homeric echo, for in it the poet's blank verse has assumed its individual manner, its half-melancholy languor, its even, dreamy cadence, and its haunting music. The germ of the 'Idylls' has ripened into something tangible and definite.

The epic, as we have it, however, took time in its growth. The original 'Idylls,' which appeared in 1859, were but four in number, 'Enid,' 'Vivien,' 'Elaine,' and 'Guinevere.' Three years later the dedication was added, and in 1869 'The Coming of Arthur,' 'The Holy Grail,' 'Pelleas and Etarre,' and 'The Passing of Arthur.' In 1871 'The Last Tournament' appeared in *The Contemporary Review*, and in 1885 'Balin and Balan' was added to 'The Round Table.' Subsequently 'Geraint and Enid' was split into two parts, the first part being entitled 'The Marriage of Geraint,' the second, which begins with the passage

'O purblind race of miserable men,'

retaining the old name of 'Geraint and Enid.'

This epic, although a gradual work, is best treated as a single poem without respect to the date of its component parts. For the gradual fusion of the different divisions into a whole has given it its essentially epic character, and welded the isolated stories into a connected and progressive narrative, moving from a definite starting-point to a clear and distinct goal. It has lent to the history a sense of unity and completeness so thoroughly defined that it is impossible to treat any portion of the poem apart from the rest, without missing its exact significance and its place in the scheme. The 'Idylls' must be studied in their entirety, if their intention is to be properly understood.

The story of Arthur, as told in Tennyson's epic, moves from the brightness of a spring morning, through the burden and heat of the day, into the pale twilight of a failure that is still illumined by success.

The epic opens with the triumphant coming of the King, and his marriage in the May morning, when all the fields were bright with spring.

> 'The sacred altar blossomed white with May,
> The Sun of May descended on their King.'

The air is full of the song of the feast, the clang of battleaxe, and the clash of brand; the world is bright with the hope of the fair beginners of a noble time, for whom 'the older order changeth, yielding place to new.'

The story then follows the fortunes and loves of Arthur's best, the wooing of haughty Lynette, and the victory of timid Enid—set over against each

other as a clear and tender contrast; and the first note of discord is struck in the tale of the harlot Vivien and her poisoned whisperings, that left not 'Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.' The suggestion of sin ripens in the story of Elaine; where Lancelot's guilty love for his Queen blinds him to the pure self-effacing passion of the lily maid of Astolat; and the final breaking up of the order is traced from the quest of the Grail and the sin of Lancelot to the last weird battle in the west, where Arthur falls.

The first three books—'The Coming of Arthur,' 'Gareth and Lynette,' and 'Geraint and Enid,' are concerned with the rise and flower of the Round Table, the remainder with its decadence. 'The Coming of Arthur' stands as a prologue, as the 'Passing' serves as an epilogue, to the whole epic, which thus opens with the victorious march of Arthur, his defeat of the Kings, and his marriage with Leodogran's daughter Guinevere, whom he had loved from the moment that he first saw her watching him from the castle walls, though she had missed him.

In his manner of tracing the growth of Arthur's prowess, and his hold upon his knights, Tennyson differs so often from Sir Thomas Malory, that it would be tedious to follow the separation step by step. One characteristic change, however, claims our attention. The proof of kingship, the drawing of the sword from the anvil, which in the earlier writer lends the main interest to 'The Book of Merlin,' is discarded by Tennyson, who seeks with characteristic taste a more picturesque and elfin

scene. For him there is a greater charm in the Excalibur that rises from the bosom of the lake, across which Arthur rows to take the mystic sword, and read the twin legends 'Take me,' and 'Cast me away.' The element of mystery which clothes the coming and the passing of Arthur makes a special appeal to the imagination of the poet. Merlin and the Lady of the Lake—

> 'Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,'

are there, and Merlin is ready with his riddling rhyme—

> 'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

From this point the mystic side of the story melts away: there is pageantry and music, battleaxe and brand, and the love-fortunes of the knights to follow. Only as the realm breaks up in the quest of the Grail, the world beyond, the world of mists and shadows, closes about the Round Table anew. The touch is delightfully the poet's own, and to this strange half-seen environment, this entertainment of spirits unawares, 'The Idylls' owe a great share of their beauty and their power. But what is gain on one side is loss on another. The dreamy mystery, which enriches 'The Idylls' as a poem, impoverishes them as a history. The story of Arthur becomes an epic, but a visionary epic: it ceases to be national, as it begins to be world-wide.

There were two courses before the poet. On the one hand, it was open to him to lend himself to archæology, to burthen his shoulder with facts, and give us, as nearly as might be, a faithful picture

of the age he depicted :—an age of rapine and ravishment, of lust and brute power, an iron age, with selfishness and greed for its gods. The poem would still have been an epic, and a national epic, but the picture would have been repellent. Tennyson chose the other course. He idealised the time, and deified the man: he gave us a blameless king in an age of chivalry, ruling a court, faulty in act, but pure in aim, —a court set out of the world, yet vexed with the trouble and sin from which no seclusion could insure it. He chose the poem, and let the history go; and it were hard to say that the result has not justified his choice. There were dangers in the way, however, —some scarcely to be avoided. The most serious danger was that affecting the character of the King and his relation to his chivalry. Faultlessness, or all but faultlessness, is in its very nature so greatly wanting in warmth and colour, that it is traced less easily in its own manifestation than in its effect upon its surroundings. In losing outline it loses strength. And it is so with Tennyson's Arthur. His influence and the influence of his oath are felt throughout the poem; but the real, tangible presence of the King is too little with us. We learn of him through the things that others say of him, rather than through the things he says himself. Once or twice he speaks, but the words are cold and rhetorical. With a saddened half-rebuke he stands by Elaine's bier, and turns to Lancelot :—

'After heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness?'

And to the knights, returned from the quest of the Grail, his mind full of the mystery, his eyes half-seeing things unseen, he speaks at length, telling them that the King's part is not to follow wandering fires, but to stay at home about his kingdom's business—business in which he, too, has visions

'In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again.'

Our nearest touch to Tennyson's Arthur, our clearest sight of the integrity and god-like strength of the King, however, are in the moments of his greatest trouble—his parting with Guinevere, and his passing from his realm. The cold, white purity of the King, who was ever virgin but for her, takes no passionate farewell of the golden hair and imperial moulded form : he stands above her like a recording angel forced to bear witness against her to his pain. Like an icy rain of hail his words sweep down upon her, as she lies at his feet :

'Liest thou here so low? . . .
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin and the breaking up of laws.

. . . . .

Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people and their bane.'

It is all too pure, too rigid, too divine for the weak womanhood of Guinevere : it is only when he pauses that she can creep one pace nearer to him. And at the end the King gives her her gleam of hope to share with him :

'Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another.'

So does the blameless king show most godlike when most intensely man.

His last utterance, from the gloomy barge, as he lies in the arms of the three queens, is instinct with the prophecy of death, and is less a revelation of his character than a hint of the future. The King has done his work; the night of visions has come, and he is no more a vision to himself. The old order, which he changed at his coming, changes again with his passing: the change is natural and ordained, one good custom must not, by the law of God, corrupt the world:

'The whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'

Bedivere, more manlike than his King, cries out for the loss of the old order, for the barren board and the scattered chivalry; but Arthur looks beyond across the ages, and sees that all is good. And even as his vessel grows to a speck upon the deep, the new sun rises bringing the new year.

This is Tennyson's Arthur, not quite a king of dreams and shadows, nor altogether a king of war and conquest. There is something in him of the manlike, much that claims his kinship to the gods. He stands as a great, luminous background to the story of his knights; as a wide, bright sky that shows

up against the breadth and brilliance of its purity the darker shadows that move before it.

Of these the nearest to the spirit of the times, as one may picture them, the wildest and the roughest, is Geraint. He knows the weakness of womankind, and is ready from the first breath of suspicion to doubt the queen. And doubting her, he fears for his own Enid, lest the evil influence of the court should overtake her too; and so he whips her off into solitude, a prey to jealousy and fear. In him we get the rude, uncultured mind, prone to suspect, unable to fathom innocence, catching at every pretext for a doubt. In him, too, we get the rough, wild spirit that leaps to vengeance at the moment. He waits in silence till Enid has reached the last strait of resistance, and then he springs upon Earl Doorm and shows no mercy. Once assured, he is as ready to believe as before he was to doubt; henceforward he will die rather than doubt. The man is an admirable type of the mind that wants stability in itself; that cannot live by faith, that must be given certainty by sight, and, when once he has seen, believes.

Side by side with him, and in vivid contrast, stands Gareth, the young knight eager to give up rank and reputation for the quest of the right. His modesty does not rebel against the humility of the kitchen: rather than be apart from Arthur he will be a scullion in his service. Never was knight more tried than Gareth throughout his ride with Lynette: every doughty deed he does for her is met with scorn, every service he shows her is repelled. And all the while his courage is never shaken, nor his strength

abated, till Death himself is overthrown. His is the enthusiasm of youth, and the modesty of greatness; of all the knights of Arthur's court he shows the fairest character. Galahad is divine, but more than man; Lancelot is manlike, but less than knight: Gareth has the enthusiasm of Pelleas without his headstrong madness, the strength of Geraint without his impatient jealousy. He stands at the beginning of the 'Idylls' as a fair ensample of Arthur's knighthood at its best, before the evil days came or the hours drew nigh in which his court could confess that it took no pleasure in purity, and had lost the savour of things lovely and of good report.

In solitude, apart, through the midst of the motley crowd of good and bad, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, his eyes fixed on the lode-star beyond him, Galahad moves across the epic, through an atmosphere of mystery and simple holiness:

> 'And one there was among us, ever moved
> Among us in white armour, Galahad.'

Begotten by enchantment, said some, living a life of enchantment towards a mystic end, Galahad was with the Round Table, but not of it. He seems to stand surrounded by a halo of light from the moment when first he sits in Merlin's chair, and the roof is riven, and the beam of light breaks into the hall with the Holy Grail stealing down it, to the last wild scene, when the last far bridge springs into fire; and, amid the shouts of all the sons of God, he passes like Elijah into the beyond. There is no book of the 'Idylls' so perfect in its scheme, so brilliant and retentive in its imagery, as 'The Holy Grail.' There is no

passage in modern poetry, perhaps, more complete in itself, more mystically vivid, than the scene of Galahad's final passage into life. It is one of those scenes that illustration would ruin, because it stands almost beyond the possibilities of pictorial art. It reminds the reader of scenes in the Revelation, scenes that the eye can picture in the air, but the hand cannot fix upon the page. It is through the events that surround him that Galahad lives to us; it is as though the God he served flashed His glory around him, to give the world an evidence of things hoped for, but unseen. The simplest purity never reveals itself to the eye; we learn what we know of it by stray glimpses, which only tell us how little we understand it after all. So it is with Galahad: he is an influence rather than a life, a sentiment rather than a revelation.

But at the end, when the rest return unsatisfied, his absence brings with it a sense of something achieved; for though his chair may desire him in vain, they know that, beyond the limits of their ken, 'they crown him otherwhere.'

At the opposite pole is Tristram, the embodiment of a passion that is nearer to lust than to love. He and his Isolt have drunk the love-potion, and are henceforward lost to life and honour; they live only for their passion. 'The Last Tournament' gives a final glimpse of the court before Guinevere's flight; and the heart of Arthur's chivalry is mildewed. The Tournament of the Dead Innocence is a travesty, a poor mockery of the old honourable jousts. The King is not there; but in his seat Lancelot, the false friend,

sighs wearily, and sees the rules of the tourney broken, and the custom of knighthood overset, while the meed of purity falls to Tristram, himself the falsest of them all. Then, in that sympathy of nature with the event which Tennyson is so fond of exercising, the thick rain falls, as the day closes in upon a scene of discontent.

> 'Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
> Though somewhat draggled at the skirt.'

Tristram passes from his triumph to his love; and the scene between Tristram and Isolt is the nearest approach to passion in the 'Idylls.' The love of Lancelot and the Queen, usually hinted at rather than expressed, glows into evidence in the farewell scene in 'Guinevere'; but the fulness of the ruin of the court is nowhere shown so clearly as in 'The Last Tournament.' It is said that Tennyson changed the wording in one passage in deference to the criticism of his friends, who thought the passion too pronounced; but the strength and suggestion of the scene remain. Tristram's love is at love's lowest; even in the presence of his Queen, with her hand in his, he can put her far enough from him to imagine her lost to him altogether, when once she has lost the charm of her womanhood.

> 'May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray,
> And past desire!'

he says, and rightly enough Isolt answers that Lancelot would have scorned to utter anything so gross, even to the swineherd's malkin. Such a scene is well reserved for the final note in the descending

scale. Almost unconsciously we compare the picture of Tristram throwing the circlet about Isolt's neck—

'Thine Order, O my Queen! . . .'

with that other picture of Percivale's sister girding the sword-belt of her hair round Galahad's waist—

'I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.'

The 'Idylls' live through these contrasts, and through them stand as a mirror of the knighthood of every age.

In Pelleas we find another type. He is the young enthusiast, who starts upon life believing it full of beauty, and at the first sight of sin, at the first experience of faithlessness, is maddened into unbelief of everything. With a boyish eagerness worthy of his name, 'Sir Baby,' he confides his hopes and fears to Gawain, who under promise to win his lady for the boy, succeeds in winning her for himself. And Pelleas, who had believed him true and Ettarre pure, is goaded into madness, into 'wrath and shame, and hate and evil fame.'

Gawain, the reckless man of his world, is only a note in the story: a note of irreverent selfishness—that cares for nothing but its own pleasure, that spends itself unprofitably, with a laugh at the vanity of human wishes. Among the lesser figures that complete the picture a few stand out in relief. Sir Bors, the reverent knight whose thoughts lie too deep for words, recedes within himself as the others clamour of their quest of the Grail, and blesses himself with silence.

'"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it;" and the tears were in his eyes.'

Modred, with the foxy face, is felt through the whole story as an evil influence is felt, with a half perception that ripens into certainty at the end. Bedivere, like a faithful watch-dog, stands at the ingress and egress of the poem, a type of the antique service that no unfaithfulness in others can estrange. The first of Arthur's knights, he is the last to leave him. His very hesitation to cast away Excalibur has root in the desire to preserve some memory of the King that may keep his fame alive.

But the figure that holds the eye and attracts the attention most keenly throughout the epic is the figure of Lancelot. From the first he is the knight that Arthur loves the best; it is he that is sent to bring Guinevere to the King. From the first he is the knight that strikes the fancy of the Queen herself; it is he whom she notices in all the throng, and marks for the goodliest. And throughout the history he proves himself the goodliest in prowess and in courtesy; there is never a word of his recorded that stands as a blot upon his chivalry. In all but the one great failure of his life he is a 'knight peerless'; and even that failure cannot altogether separate him from sympathy. Lancelot's failure is mainly the misfortune of circumstance. He is sent to bring the Queen to Arthur; the Queen has already been attracted to him. The first impression produced upon her is accentuated by contrast with the King; she cannot breathe in the cold, white light of his purity: she wants warmth and colour, which she finds in Lancelot. The way lies

so simply before him: and, from the first moment of their understanding, their love becomes at once the glory and the disgrace of Lancelot's life. It nerves him to deeds of prowess, through all of which he remains modest and unassuming.

> 'In me!'

he says,

> 'there dwells
> No greatness save it be some far-off touch
> Of greatness to know well I am not great.'

But it keeps him, too, from a truer and a purer love, which was made to make him happy: it separates him from Elaine. It keeps him from the Grail: it grows into his life till it strangles every other ambition and every other yearning. The quest is not for him. And at the end it sets him in battle against the King. To trace Lancelot's life is to find him set, much as the hero of a Greek drama, in the toils of the gods who are too strong for him: a man, with the noblest aims and aspirations, dragged by the force of circumstance into acts entirely alien to his nature. Ever and again the good spirit breaks out in him: at Elaine's death, at the regathering of the knights from the quest of the Grail—in a word, after the two great proofs of his failure—he knows himself for what he is, and loathes his baser nature. But temptation is there: Guinevere is still beside him: he cannot turn back. Fate and a woman hold him, and wreck his life between them.

The women of the 'Idylls' claim less attention than the men: but they, too, have diversity and character. Lynette, haughty and imperious; Enid, meek and lovable; Elaine, tender to weakness;

Ettarre, the obdurate, self-conscious beauty; Isolt, fiery and passionate—each is a type and an example. Two stand out more conspicuously—Guinevere and Vivien.

The odds against the Queen are overwhelming: her life is warped from its beginning. She is a woman made for love, with a warmth of passion in her veins, which must be satisfied. Mated to Lancelot she would have been constant, and would have passed for pure: wedded to the King she is starved for lack of love, and her womanhood forces her to seek satisfaction outside the limits of her honour. She never understands Arthur: his thoughts and ways are inaccessible to her: she moves upon a lower level of aim and intellect. 'There are thousands now—such women:' the marriage of ill-assorted minds has no better illustration than in the life of Camelot. She only needed to be shown the King's love: she could not take it on faith. When at last he proves to her the depth and strength of it, and she knows that after all her faithlessness he still loves her, she is satisfied. She has seen his love: it has been proved: she understands him now.

> 'Ah my God,
> What might not I have made of thy fair world,
> Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
> It was my duty to have loved the highest:
> It surely was my profit had I known:
> It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
> We needs must love the highest when we see it,
> Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Of Vivien it is hard to speak; for the poet, striving to keep his subject within limits, has outlined

rather than expressed her. And the character is better outlined: it scarcely repays study. She stands, of course, at the lowest point that womanhood can reach,—not only wanton, but revelling in her wantonness; not only unclean, but unwilling to leave any name cleaner than her own. The picture of the court would have been incomplete without her, and the poet has sketched her with unquestionable taste and reticence. She strikes, too, the first note of unfaith: scandal is ever dearest to those with whom scandal is most concerned. Even Arthur is not spared, her defaming and defacing leave

'Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.'

But to consider the characters employed in the 'Idylls' is to make a very insufficient survey of the subject. The interaction of character on character, and the general conduct and progress of the epic, might be profitably treated in a volume of itself. Such things as can be said here must be said concisely and in brief.

The story rests its epic unity on its confinement within the limits of the fortunes of Arthur. It starts upon the morning on which he takes up his kingdom, and ends with the night on which he lays it down. The early chapters of the story describe the rise, the later chapters the fall, of the Round Table. But the poet has been attracted very little to the period of ascendency: a few lines in 'The Coming of Arthur,' and a stray allusion here and there in the following poems, are all that he gives to the beginnings of the Kingdom; he is mainly interested in its ruin. And

his treatment of the subject is at once interesting and characteristic.

In Tennyson's narrative the failure of Arthur is traced to two very diverse passions which enter the court and destroy its chivalry,—a religious passion, which spends itself in the quest of the Grail, and a physical passion, which starts with the love of Lancelot and Guinevere, and ends in the prevalence of that 'loathsome opposite' of the purity and innocence which the King had imagined to be the heart and soul of his knighthood. These two passions, standing at the antipodes of motive, work together to the same end, and unite in the destruction of Arthur's scheme. The quest of the Grail has been so generally regarded as the purest, most single-minded outcome of the age, that Tennyson's use of it is the more singular and the more acute. The light in which he regards the quest is essentially the light in which he himself walks; his attitude towards it is the attitude most characteristic of the man. The spirit of Tennyson's poetry is a spirit of calm, reasoning progress,—as fully averse, on the one hand, to a lifeless stagnation, as, on the other, to an untimely assertion of right. The happy life appears to him to lie in the calm pursuit of the

> 'One far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves;'

the order of the universe is an order slowly broadening down

> 'From precedent to precedent.'

Μηδὲν ἄγαν might be set as a motto upon his title-page.

It is this spirit that prompts Tennyson to trace the downfall of Arthur's court from the moment when it seeks excess; and excess is sought at its poles. At the one limit stands the religious ecstasy, at the other the sensual; each an excess, and each equally fatal. Arthur's knights, as Tennyson pictures them, were straining after something outside the bounds of their knighthood in the pursuit of their visionary Grail: they were losing the substance of their life in following its shadow. The excess of ecstasy which religion brought them was as unfitted to their even purity and simple rectitude, as the most sensuous excess of ecstasy which could weaken them through love. The more eager they became, the greater was their failure. For it was not the fiery Lancelot, spurring on after the vision, who saw the Grail in a perfect revelation; but Galahad, whose whole quest was calm and unimpassioned, who set aside all fever of desire, and sought the sign with the easy confidence of virtue. The other knights were not made for visions, nor apt for heavenly revelation; their lives were lives of knightly deeds, which religious ecstasy could only warp from their straight course. It was this taking of too much upon themselves that helped to ruin their kingdom; this tendency to presumption and prematurity, which was rooted in an unwarranted self-confidence.

On the other side was the physical excess—the

growth of impure love; and the two excesses combine naturally and with ease. A discontent with his environment, an unsettled yearning towards something undefined, a curiosity to learn all the secrets that life has to tell—these emotions, moving together, throw the man into either extreme,—at one moment into an unhealthy religious enthusiasm, at the other into a passionate outburst of sensuality. The two extremes have root in the same emotion, and are approached by the same series of desires. But the one is apt to pass for virtue, the other for vice. In fact, both are vices; both throw the mind off its balance, and turn its course from that middle way which is the safest. On occasion the two ecstasies combine, and Lancelot, seeking the Grail and remembering Guinevere the while, is at his wildest, most unmanageable moment. The two passions struggle in him, and make his mind a hell. The preservation of the healthy mind in the healthy body is Tennyson's creed, no less in the 'Idylls' than elsewhere. Whatever tends to throw the mind into an extreme is unhealthy, and so unmanly. The King himself, the strongest and truest of them all, was not of the Quest. He saw that his duty held him at home, and he continued in the ordinary round of his life, while his knights were following the false fires. The visions of his life were stronger—and not less beautiful—because they were free of passion. For Tennyson's true knight and happy warrior is the man who, not being passion's slave, lives on the highest level of striving manhood, moving onward

to a spiritual city, which is only to be won by the endurance of a man and the purity of a God.

'For a man is not as God,
But then most godlike, being most a man.'

FACSIMILE OF MS. FROM 'GARETH AND LYNETTE.'

CHAPTER IX

FROM THE *IDYLLS* TO THE DRAMAS

THE first four Idylls, 'Enid,' 'Vivien,' 'Elaine,' and 'Guinevere,' which appeared in 1859, were considered at the time rather as four distinct studies of female character than as the portion of an incomplete epic. Taken by themselves, the character-study would naturally seem to be the most emphatic reason for their existence; it is only as they fall into their places in the entire work that the women sink into the background, and the history of the Round Table grows into prominence. But this growth was needed to lend the epic its full importance, and the 'Idylls,' as they first appeared, bore a less urgent claim to recognition than their completion has earned them. They stood as four separate, and in part unconnected, poems, circling round four diverse women. That their period and environment were the same was no evidence of unity in the work: they were no more parts of a whole than were 'Adeline,' 'Margaret,' 'Isabel,' and 'Lilian.' This incompletion explains a lack of enthusiasm in their reception. It is easy to be wise when the event has passed, and to insist that the critic should have seen the significance of the movement, and understood that these first poems

were only the germ of a full and proportioned epic. But the gift of foresight is rare; and the 'Idylls' met with no very expectant reception. FitzGerald turned from them to look back nearly twenty years with the retrospect of regret, and bewail to W. H. Thompson the loss of some of Tennyson's earlier work which had been destroyed in the London days —no doubt, during the process of selection which insured the 1842 volumes from failure. 'I wish,' he said, 'I had secured more leaves from that old "Butcher's Book," torn up in old Spedding's rooms in 1842, when the press went to work with, I think, the last of old Alfred's best.' It required time and completion to prove that it was only with the appearance of the 'Idylls' that 'Alfred's best' had matured; and the momentary dissatisfaction was also due in part to a change in the poet's attitude and utterance. The public mind likes to fix upon some obvious trait or mannerism in an author, to establish that trait as his characteristic, and to test every new work in search of it. If the trait is present, the work is worthy of the author; if there is a change, he is declining. This popular estimate is, of course, founded upon an absolute fallacy. It presupposes in every author the faculty of finding at the outset the medium in which he works most successfully, and the subjects most congenial to his talent—a faculty which is scarcely ever present to the young writer. It is only through the experience which is built of less successes that the author passes to his own peculiar triumph. To regard the smaller achievements as measures for the larger is to lose all sense of perspective and proportion. It fared so with Tennyson.

His mellifluous lyrics and tender ballads had led the public to expect of him a charm of sound that disregarded sense; a voice, as it were, of a singer heard in the distance across a summer lawn, the words lost amid the space of flowers and fruit that lay between. 'In Memoriam' struck a new note, deeper, and with a longer resonance; but the true chord was not found yet. 'Maud' burst out into a fresh melody, and assumed a dramatic movement; the poet was nearer his own element by now. In the 'Idylls' the true harmony was developed. There was dramatic force and dramatic progress, together with a thoroughly keen insight into character, and the story was told in a metre which was essentially the poet's own. Tennyson's blank verse, gradually growing in depth and roundness, attained in the 'Idylls' a deep-mouthed music which is even Homeric. With an unbroken melody it combines a masculine strength, which peculiarly fits it for the medium in which an epic should unfold itself. It has music without effeminacy, strength without harshness; and, above all, it never grows monotonous. It is the metre in which Tennyson has done his best and most individual work, and the failure of his imitators to catch his characteristic melody is a proof that he has brought into literature a music which is all his own. But it was not the music his critics expected of him, and the appreciation was not immediate. Later, in their complete form, the 'Idylls' were to be recognised as Tennyson's most characteristic work. And in this connection it is pleasant to recall the story of the old Breton landlady, who, when the poet was ending his stay under her roof, refused to tender him any

bill, or to accept any gratuity, since he was the man who sang so beautifully of 'Our King Arthur.'

Two slighter poems appeared in the same year as the 'Idylls.' In *The Times* for May 9th, 1859, over the signature 'T.,' Tennyson printed a copy of verses called 'The War,' written as an inspiration to the Volunteer movement. It is a bluff, blustering bit of stormy music.

'There is a sound of thunder afar,
  Storm in the South that darkens the day,
Storm of battle and thunder of war,
  Well, if it will not roll our way.
    Storm! Storm! Riflemen, form!
    Ready, be ready to meet the storm!
    Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen, form!

. . . .

Form, be ready to do or die!
  Form in Freedom's name and the Queen's!
True, that we have a faithful ally,
  But only the Devil knows what he means.
    Form! Form! Riflemen, form!
    Ready, be ready to meet the storm!
    Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen, form!'

His other contribution was 'The Grandmother's Apology,' afterwards renamed 'The Grandmother,' which appeared in *Once a Week*, with an illustration by Sir J. E. Millais. 'The Grandmother' has the quiet religious charm which gives distinction to so many of Tennyson's character sketches; it is resigned without being didactic, enjoying all the easy faith of the simple-minded. The old grandmother, as her memory travels back, feels her dead sons about her in the kitchen, loses all sense of time and loss, and looks out towards her own end with restful expectation. It is a peaceful monotone in the twilight of life, beautiful with the beauty of a calm work perfected. Sir J. E.

Millais' design illustrated the subject satisfactorily. Before an open window, with flowers beyond, stands a plain table, on which lies an open Bible. The old lady sits to the right of the picture, her head pillowed in an arm-chair. Annie is at her feet, with her left hand between the old lady's; a cat laps milk in a corner. It is a domestic picture of unbroken tranquillity.

The 'Idylls' were scarcely published when Tennyson was out of England, travelling in Portugal with Mr. F. T. Palgrave, afterwards Professor of Poetry at Oxford. They visited Vigo, Lisbon, and Cintra, and spent some time at the monastery of da Cortica. They also took a natural and especial pleasure in wandering about Joao de Castro's garden of the Perrha Verde, and in sitting by the fountain which marks the spot where Camoens read the first cantos of his 'Lusiad' to the king. It was a hurried visit, but it left pleasant memories, some of which were gracefully collected into a short paper, written by Mr. F. T. Palgrave for a periodical called *Under the Crown*. His account makes further mention of a bull-fight, at which the travellers were present: a bloodless one by-the-bye—the poets were indisposed to brutality.

It was intended, we are informed by Professor Palgrave himself, that the journey should be continued to Cadiz; but at Lisbon Tennyson was taken ill; and the travellers, therefore, returned to England. As some recompense for the disappointment, Tennyson took his friend to Cambridge and showed him round the Colleges.

In the autumn of the same year, while the Tennysons were entertaining Dean Stanley in the Isle of

Wight, a curious little controversy was stirring at Cambridge around the Laureate's reputation. A bust of Tennyson had been executed by Mr. Woolner and presented to Trinity College; and a question arose as to the position in which it might most fitly be placed. Tennyson's warmest admirers wished it set in the Library, a room hitherto devoted exclusively to portraits and busts of men whose reputation was finally assured. This was declared by an opposing party to be too high an honour for any living head, and these dissentients eventually carried the question. The bust was placed in the vestibule, whence it was subsequently removed into the Library at a date when Tennyson's position seemed irrevocably secure. FitzGerald had his customary comment on the situation. 'I read, or was told,' he wrote to W. H. Thompson, 'they wouldn't let old Alfred's bust into your Trinity. They are right, I think, to let no one in there (as it should be in Westminster Abbey) till a hundred years are past; when, after too much admiration (perhaps), and then a reaction of undue dis-esteem, men have settled into some steady opinion on the subject; supposing always that the hero survives so long, which of itself goes far to decide the question. No doubt Alfred Tennyson will do *that*.' There is a ring of sincerity in the last words which goes far to condone many little instances of distrust and discontent which mar FitzGerald's admiration for his friend.

Meanwhile Tennyson's genius was trying a new and not altogether sympathetic field. He seems to have distrusted his achievement in the 'Idylls,'

and so to have made a sudden descent from chivalry to the cares and problems of nineteenth century life. The reaction was indeed complete; for, from his study of the highly nurtured circle, wearing fine raiment in kings' houses, he swung out into the contemplation of humble mercantile life, contending with petty difficulties and harassed by inconsequent trials. The next few years found him busy upon 'Sea Dreams,' 'Enoch Arden,' and 'The Northern Farmer'; and—with a change of view which was not actually a change of spirit—upon 'Aylmer's Field.' These poems argue a curious restlessness in the taste of the writer: he seems uncertain still of the subjects most congenial to him, and the change is not an improvement. The true spirit of Tennyson was not framed of such slight elements as 'Sea Dreams' and 'Enoch Arden.' His delicate touch and his sensibility were squandered and ill-spent among the sordid seaside lodgings, or the low fishermen's huts upon the beach. Tennyson has lacked the delicate art of M. François Coppée, whenever he has approached subjects which lack beauty in themselves. In trying to adorn the scene he has obliterated its characteristic features. He has had no keen dramatic insight into a sordid situation: his art is thrown away on such coarse canvases. He felt this himself after a few attempts, and returned to his chivalry again. But for fully five years from the appearance of the first four 'Idylls' Tennyson passed through an interesting period of unsettlement, which requires at least a passing survey.

The first of these poems of the reaction was 'Sea

Dreams,' which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January 1860. As is the wont of the first step in a change, it sprang at once to the antipodes of its predecessors. In none of the succeeding poems of this period was Tennyson occupied with such a narrow and uninspiring theme. 'Sea Dreams' is the story of a city clerk, who, trusting the word of a man more influential than himself, throws all his savings into a single venture, and is ruined. The whole poem is occupied by a midnight conversation between him and his wife, in which she pleads, at first unsuccessfully, but at last to his persuasion, for his forgiveness of the man who has ruined them. The two have dreamed in the early night, and the recital of their two dreams forms the theme round which the question of forgiveness groups itself. It is a little lesson in long-suffering, simple and unaffected as its surroundings, but in its very simplicity undramatic. The poet has not lost himself in his characters: both alike talk with an equal fluency of phrase. The clerk recounts his dream with a picturesque precision; his wife tells hers with the same warmth and proportion of colour. The poet is speaking all the while: we never forget that. But at the same time he speaks to such purpose: the poem is rich in phrases which have become a part of our literature.

> 'And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
> Remembering her dear Lord who died for all,
> And musing on the little lives of men,
> And how they mar this little by their feuds.'

Or again:

> 'Trusted him with all,
> All my poor scrapings from a dozen years
> Of dust and deskwork.'

Or even more notably, the lines quoted in a leading case in 1872 by the Attorney-General:—

'I stood like one that had received a blow:
I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,
A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,
A curse in his God bless you. . . .
Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in his supple-sliding knee.'

It is full of gems, this little poem, full of perfect phrases and flawless descriptions: but there is too much art for the subject. The humble theme is too delicately decorated: Tennyson is not occupied with a perfectly sympathetic theme.

He had returned much more nearly to his own in 'Tithonus,' a poem which Thackeray won from him for *The Cornhill Magazine* of February 1860. It was a great pride to the editor, his own daughter tells us, to have secured this poem, and he might indeed be proud of publishing a masterpiece so exquisitely fashioned and polished. 'Tithonus,' which in the original opened a little differently—

'Ay me! Ay me! the woods decay and fall,'

is not only touched with Tennyson's richest colour, it has also a distinct place in his work as an utterance of his favourite creed. *Μηδὲν ἄγαν* is once more its motto. The immortality which Tithonus desired turns to ashes in his mouth: he is sick of life, who cannot die. But

'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts,'

and the boon he craved of them turns to a curse. He had taken too much upon himself: Time brought

in its revenge. It is in the middle way of life and death that true happiness must lie.

In 1861 Tennyson was silent, except for a copy of verses, 'The Sailor Boy,' published in Miss Emily Faithfull's *Victoria Regia* at Christmas. It reads as though it had been written at sea; indeed it probably was, for in the early autumn of that year Tennyson and his wife were travelling on the Continent. In July Arthur Hugh Clough started, a dying man, to seek a new lease of life among the Pyrenees, and here he met the Laureate and Mrs. Tennyson. It was during this journey that Tennyson wrote 'In the Valley of Cauteretz.' For here, thirty-two years before, he and Arthur Hallam had passed in their exciting expedition to the revolutionists; and here, during that time, he had conceived the notion of 'Œnone.' It was the sight of the Pyrenees and their scenery that suggested the description of Ida. At this second visit with Clough he recalled the first journey with a painful pleasure, and talked freely with his friend upon the subject. In Clough's diary for September 7th, he recounts how he had walked with Tennyson to 'a sort of island between two waterfalls, with pines on it, of which he retained a recollection.' It had, moreover, furnished him with a simile in 'The Princess.' The old days came back to the poet and the old sensations revived, as they will under the influence of scenery which has been forgotten in the interval.

'All along the valley, while I walked to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolled away;
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
The living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

This was in September, and two months later Arthur Hugh Clough died at Florence. The valley of Cauteretz must, from that day, have had a dual message for Tennyson.

Towards the end of 1861 'Helen's Tower' was privately printed by Lord Dufferin. The thin quarto pamphlet, in which it first appeared, bears on the title-page a steel engraving of the tower, and the next page has the following statement, printed in illuminated characters :—

xx day of November MDCCCLX
This day at 3 of ye clock did I, Catherine Hamilton,
christen this Tower by ye name, style, and title of

HELEN'S TOWER.

CATHERINE HAMILTON.

Whereof are we ye witnesses :

GEORGINA DE ROS.	ARCHIBALD HAMILTON.
CAROLINE ELIZ. A. BATESON.	THOMAS VERNER.
A. M. DE LA CHEROIS CROMMELIN.	S. D. CROMMELIN.
FRANCES C. FITZGERALD DE ROS.	THOS. BATESON.
BLANCHE A. G. FITZGERALD DE ROS.	DE ROS.
HELEN SELINA DUFFERIN.	DUFFERIN AND CLANEBOYNE.

RICHARD KER.

The book contains two poems, both unsigned. The first is entitled, 'To my dear Son, on his twenty-first birthday, with a Silver Lamp,' and is headed by the quotation 'Fiat Lux,' and dated June 21, 1847. The second is Tennyson's 'Helen's Tower.' On the last page, again illuminated, is another little manifesto.

On Wednesday, October 23, 1861,
Helen's Tower was finished, and the flag hoisted by us.

HELEN M'DONNELL.
HARRIOT HAMILTON.

The copy of the pamphlet in the British Museum has in manuscript on the pink paper cover: 'Given to me by Lord Dufferin. R. S. TURNER.'

In the following year the 'Idylls' appeared in a new edition, prefaced by the dedication to the Memory of the Prince Consort: and on the first of May the 'Ode' sung at the opening of the International Exhibition was printed, and incorrectly printed, in most of the newspapers. A month later *Fraser's Magazine* published an emended copy.

The next year—the year in which Milnes was created Lord Houghton, was equally uneventful. 'The welcome to Alexandra' and the 'Attempts at Classic Metres in Quantity' were the Laureate's only publications in 1863. The 'Welcome' was originally printed as a four-page sheet, and sold in the crowd on the seventh of March, the day on which the Princess landed in England. It bore the imprint of Edward Moxon, and is now, in its original form, an extremely rare acquisition. The first draft is without five of the most spirited lines; the passage

> 'Rush to the roof, sudden rocket, and higher
> Melt into stars for the land's desire!
> Roll and rejoice, jubilant voice,
> Roll as a ground swell dash'd on the strand,
> Roar as the sea when he welcomes the land,'

being a later addition. Thackeray gave a humorous picture of the poet, welcoming the Princess, in *The Cornhill Magazine'* for 1863. 'I would respectfully liken his Highness,' he said, 'to a giant showing a beacon torch on a windy headland. His flaring torch is a pine-tree, to be sure, which nobody can wield but

himself. He waves it: and four times in the midnight he shouts mightily, "Alexandra!" and the Pontic pine is whirled into the ocean, and Enceladus goes home.' It is a graphic caricature.

The 'Attempts at Classic Metre,' skilful but not very interesting successes, appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine* in December.

The following year is much more noteworthy. Tennyson's work in 1864 began with his Epitaph on the Duchess of Kent, which is inscribed on Theed's statue at Frogmore.

> 'Long as the heart beats life within her breast
> Thy child will bless thee, guardian mother mild,
> And far away thy memory will be blest
> By children of the children of thy child.'

These lines were also printed in the *Court Journal* for March 19, 1864, and are, perhaps, inferior to but one of his epitaphs, the lines on Sir John Franklin.

But it is the 'Enoch Arden' volume which renders the year considerable. Besides 'The Grandmother,' 'Sea Dreams,' 'The Sailor Boy,' and the 'Attempts at Classic Metre,' the book, dedicated, in a tender poem, to his wife, contained three new and important pieces—'Enoch Arden,' 'Aylmer's Field,' and the 'Northern Farmer' (old style). This was the chief and last achievement of the Laureate's reactionary period, and the poems showed a return, gradual but evident, to his natural manner. For while 'Sea Dreams' stand almost in a class by itself, 'Aylmer's Field' recurs rather obviously to the manner of 'Dora' and the early Idylls, and 'Enoch Arden' separates itself still further from the uninviting life of a city

clerkship. It draws nearer to the world of adventure, of 'moving accidents by flood and field,' of shipwreck and desolation. It possesses, too, one strange gleam of mystery which frees the poem from a bondage to the obvious. It is a return to nature and to art. But neither this poem, nor 'Aylmer's Field,' are really representative of Tennyson's work. Both have one failing in common: they set themselves to tell a story, without having a sufficiently strong story to tell. 'Aylmer's Field' is the history of a thwarted love, warped by the pride of parents, and turned at last into a disastrous issue. Neither the characters nor the plot have novelty. The one bold effort of the poem is the recital in verse of a funeral sermon, based on the text, 'Your house is left unto you desolate.' This is a strong and unaccustomed experiment, which finds vent in a vigorous piece of denunciatory rhetoric. It is effective as a *tour de force*, but its length sets it somewhat out of proportion to the rest of the story. The conclusion is overweighted by the massiveness of its oratory. The story of 'Aylmer's Field' was supplied to Tennyson by Mr. Woolner, and it is characteristic of his manner of work that he refused to be satisfied with a bare outline, but demanded from his friend a lengthy relation of all the incidents.

The story of 'Enoch Arden' is equally simple. Two fisher-lads love the same girl: Enoch wins her, Philip remains solitary. Enoch goes to sea, and his vessel is lost; after a while, Annie, his wife, marries Philip. Then Enoch returns, and, learning the truth, keeps his identity a secret till he finds he is



At p. 190

LADY TENNYSON.

After the picture by G. F. Watts, R.A.

dying. The poem has been dramatised, but it can scarcely have made a strong play; the situations throughout are too inevitable. But in many respects it makes a fine poem. It is overcrowded with detail: every little domestic movement in the fishing-huts is recounted with painful precision, every little step in Annie's acceptance of Philip is traced with tender solicitude. But it is animated by three strongly drawn characters—Enoch, the rough uncultured fisherman, amiable but not over sympathetic; Philip, true, enduring, and a little insipid; Annie, a type of simple, uninspired womanhood, incapable of genuine passion and lasting faithfulness—leading the life of a quiet, domestic animal, without spirit or intellect. Each character is admirably drawn; and the three move through a series of richly elaborated scenes. The descriptive passages are in Tennyson's happiest mood; here is a perfect picture of the little village, contrasted with a stretch of tropic scenery on Enoch's desolate island:

> 'Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;
> And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;
> Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
> In cluster, then a moulder'd church; and higher
> A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd mill;
> And high in heaven beyond it a gray down
> With Danish barrows; and a hazel-wood
> By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
> Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.'

And then the contrast:

> 'No sail from day to day, but every day
> The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
> Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
> The blaze upon the waters to the east;
> The blaze upon his island overhead;

'The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven;
The hollower-bellowing Ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise,—but no sail.'

And lastly there is the one little mystic touch, curiously introduced into so ordinary a relation, by which Annie is made to seek for an omen of Enoch's presence by opening her Bible at random. She puts her finger upon a text, and reads, 'Under the palm-tree.' Then she dreams of him, and believes him dead. It was the moment of Enoch's darkest hour on the desert-island, the hour before his rescue. This little touch—artificial, perhaps, but artistic—is precisely the touch of Tennyson; and it has more than an artistic interest. It has its origin in a peculiar action of the poet's own mind, which may best be described in his own words. On the 7th of May 1874 he wrote as follows:—

'I have never had any revelations through anæsthetics, but a kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had quite up from my boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come to me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till, all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to resolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility. The loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. . . . I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?'

One of these trances Tennyson describes in 'In Memoriam' (xcv.), a passage the significance of which

is generally missed. Here he recounts a vision of the old home-life in the evening, when Arthur seems to return to him, and commune with him.

'The living soul was flash'd on mine.'

He alludes to the sensation, too, in 'The Ancient Sage,' in the lines beginning—

'More than once when I
Sat all alone.'

This tendency to trance is also the wellspring of Tennyson's affection for mysticism; and his return to the supernatural side of nature, in 'Enoch Arden,' proved that he was releasing himself from his fetters. The time was indeed come for a change of spirit. For though something of Tennyson's domestic epoch may have been due to his own misgivings, much must have been inspired by the tendency of the moment. The most individual author must be influenced by the literary atmosphere in which he finds himself; and at this time Tennyson was surrounded by a very depressing fog of prejudice and convention. Poetry had sunk to the most sordid and valueless themes, to the loves of the curate and the governess, and the inconsiderable annals of the provincial market-town. A pitiful prudery found every strong and vital subject indiscreet, drooping its eyelids and raising its hands at a love which was not blessed by the approval of parents, and sanctified by the smile of the family breakfast-table. It was impossible to write in such an atmosphere without contamination; and Tennyson's work suffered in the natural course of suffering. It became, for the moment, rigid, strait-laced, finical. It never lost its

beauty of form or its perfection of finish; but it lost momentarily the sense of the subjects worthiest itself and the art it followed. Mr. Swinburne, replying a little later to the attacks of his critics, summed up the situation in a few vigorous phrases. 'With English versifiers,' he said, 'the idyllic form is alone in fashion. The one great and prosperous poet of the time has given out the tune, and the hoarser choir takes it up. His highest lyrical work remains unimitated, being in the main inimitable. But the trick which suits an idyll is easier to assume; and the note has been struck so often that the shrillest songsters can affect to catch it up. We have idylls good and bad, ugly and pretty; idylls of the farm and the mills; idylls of the dining-room and the deanery; idylls of the gutter and the gibbet. If the Muse of the minute will not feast with "gig-men" and their wives, she must mourn with costermongers and their trulls.' But the phase was only momentary. A revolution was in store for poetry. The sudden and extraordinary success of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 gave an impetus to the pre-Raphaelite school. Swinburne and Rossetti hurried poetry breathless to the opposite pole, to the fevered couch of 'Dolores' and the amorous arms of 'Faustine.' Once more the excitement of emancipation leapt to extremes; once more Tennyson stood in the middle way. But the movement influenced him. After 'Sea Dreams' and 'Enoch Arden' he wrote 'Lucretius' and 'The Last Tournament.' The bacchanalian frenzy and passion of the pre-Raphaelites was softened by the natural calm of Tennyson's own temperament; but there came to

him, too, an access of warmth and colour. And, with the new spirit, he returned to his old self once more.

The other noteworthy poem in the 'Enoch Arden' volume, 'The Northern Farmer,' is interesting as an example of Tennyson's dramatic habit in its most developed form. His poems in dialect are as faultless and convincing as the late Mr. William Barnes's verses in the Dorsetshire tongue, and in verisimilitude they are more remarkable even than these, since Mr. Barnes wrote only the language of a people among whom he moved in daily intercourse. The forerunner of 'To-morrow,' 'Owd Roä,' 'The Northern Cobbler,' and 'The Spinster's Sweet-'Arts,' cannot be passed over without recognition. Trench was particularly pleased with this first of the series. 'Have you read,' he wrote to the Bishop of Oxford, '"The Northern Farmer," in Tennyson's last volume? Every clergyman ought to study it. It is a wonderful revelation of the heathenism still in the land, and quite the most valuable thing in the book.' Not quite the most valuable thing, perhaps; but certainly the most human, the most vigorous, the most dramatic.

The first proofs of the volume went to press with the title, 'Idylls of the Hearth,' a name which was probably cancelled as being too closely allied to 'Idylls of the King.' These proofs, which are now in the possession of Mr. J. Dykes Campbell, are full of corrections in Tennyson's handwriting, 'The Northern Farmer' having an unusually large number of emendations. Whole verses are interpolated, long passages cut away. The final correction of the name must have been reserved for the last revise, and the original title

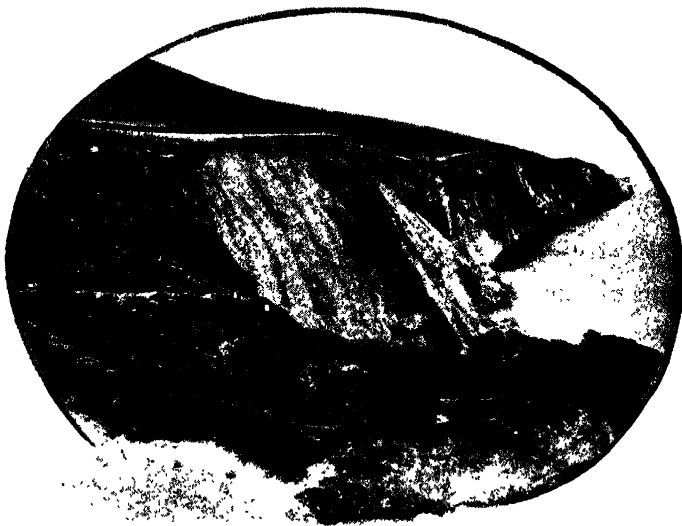
has a particular interest from its indication of the tone of Tennyson's mind at the moment. His muse was seated by the hearth, dozing, as it were, in the genial warmth of the fire. The awaking was to follow.

During this period Tennyson was very quiet, and we learn but little of him from his associates. It is only here and there that an incident breaks through the monotony of his life. On the 12th of February 1864 we find him in the midst of a circle of congenial friends. On that day Robert Browning signed his will in the presence of Tennyson and Mr. F. T. Palgrave; and in the evening there was a dinner-party at Mr. Palgrave's house at York Gate, Regent's Park. Tennyson and Browning were there, Mr. Gladstone and Sir John Simeon, Mr. Woolner and Mr. Reginald Palgrave, Monsignor Patterson and Mr. John Ogle, Francis H. Doyle, Mr. F. T. Palgrave himself, and his brother, W. Gifford Palgrave.

For the last named Tennyson had a great respect. 'I think,' he once said to Professor F. T. Palgrave, 'your brother is the cleverest man I ever saw'; and it is he whom the Laureate addresses as Ulysses in the 'Demeter' volume. He had, indeed, earned the title, having been Consul in 1866 at Soukhoum Kale, in 1867 at Trebizond, in 1873 at St. Thomas, in 1876 at Manilla, and in 1878 Consul-General in Bulgaria. To these he added in 1879 the consulship at Bangkok, and in 1884 he was Consul-General of the Republic of Uruguay, a position which he still held at his death.

He and Tennyson, however, met but seldom. At the dinner above mentioned they merely encountered each other; in September 1887 they spent an afternoon together.

It was in this same year (1864), on the 8th of April, that Garibaldi paid the visit to Tennyson to which the Laureate refers in the poem 'To Ulysses,' to which allusion has been made above. Garibaldi was much struck by the profusion of foliage in the Farringford garden, the 'cedar green,' the 'giant ilex,' and the 'yucca which no winter quells.' 'I wish I had your trees,' he said. And, before he left, he added another to the number, a *Wellingtonia gigantea*, which he planted in the grounds as a souvenir of his visit. The little act of courtesy was happily remembered by the poet, as he told his



'THE QUARRIED DOWNS OF WIGHT.'

Ulysses how he loved to walk amid the riches of his garden by 'the quarried downs of Wight':

> 'Or watch the waving pine which here
> The warrior of Caprera set,
> A name that earth will not forget
> Till earth has rolled her latest year.'

It was in 1864 or 1865 that Tennyson first made the acquaintance of Mr. Frederick Locker, to whom the present writer is much indebted for the following facts relating to a friendship which his correspondent describes as 'one of the greatest pleasures of his life.' Shortly after meeting Mr. Frederick and Lady Charlotte Locker, Lord Tennyson was their host at Grayshot Hall, near Haslemere; and the Lockers were frequently with the poet at Farringford and Aldworth. Tennyson, on his side, was not seldom Mr. Locker's guest in Chesham Street, at Rowfant, or New Haven Court, Cromer. About 1870 when Mr. Locker was living at 91 Victoria Street, Lord Tennyson secured a *pied-à-terre* at Albert Mansions, opposite his friends, in order to be near them. They saw much of each other at this time, often taking a morning walk together in the Park. Lord Tennyson occasionally rented a furnished house for a month or two, generally in the Belgravian district. He was present at Rowfant, Sussex, in 1874, at Mr. Locker's second marriage to Jane, daughter of Sir Curtis Lampson, Bart., whose name Mr. Locker added to his own. Lord and Lady Tennyson, too, were present at Westminster Abbey, in February 1878, when their second son, Lionel, was married to Eleanor, the only daughter of Mr. Frederick and Lady Charlotte Locker. Tennyson and Mr. Locker-Lampson travelled upon the Continent together on three occasions, visiting Paris in 1868, Paris and Switzerland in 1869, and St. Moritz, Engadine, about 1872.

In 1865 Tennyson was elected a member of the Royal Society; but the year is chiefly marked by a

sorrow. On February 21, 1865, he lost his mother, who died at Well Walk, Hampstead, in her eighty-fifth year. She was buried at Highgate. The loss of her tender and unselfish love helped the Laureate towards a temporary seclusion, and increased his dislike of observation, which had already become almost morbid. He began to threaten to leave Freshwater,—'frightened away,' as FitzGerald told Frederick Tennyson, 'by hero-worshippers.' The old hatred of the *digito monstrari*, which Charles Knight had noticed in him, was growing upon him more and more; and the threat took form in 1869, in the removal of the family to the new house, Aldworth, which he had built for himself on a remote terrace, under the crest of Blackdown, near Haslemere. Henceforth this spot shared with Farringford the associations of the Laureate's home. The building of Aldworth, however, was not due to a desire of seclusion alone. The air of Farringford proved scarcely bracing enough for Mrs. Tennyson, and it was in her interest that Tennyson first visited Blackdown in the autumn of 1866, with a view to fixing a site for his new house. A consultation was held with Mrs. Gilchrist, at Brookbank, and, after several spots had been inspected, the site on which Aldworth now stands was chosen. Without doubt its seclusion commended it; and the distress at publicity was further proved, in the year of his mother's death, by Tennyson's refusal of a baronetcy. This step was as popular at the time as his subsequent acceptance of a peerage was unpopular, and in both cases we feel now that the sentiment was strained. There was no real room

for congratulation or regret in either case; the question was too trivial, or too strictly personal, for serious discussion.

The popularity inspired by this refusal was almost forfeited, however, by an action much worthier consideration. The reader may perhaps recall the name of a little boy who, entering Louth Grammar School after the Tennysons had left, was fired with admiration by the story of their literary prowess. The years that intervened had destined the boy to a life of action, and the names of Tennyson and Eyre reconnect themselves under strange circumstances. A revolution of the blacks in Jamaica had demanded a violent suppression, and Eyre had acted with singular valour and readiness in discomfiting the insurgents. A rather ill-advised and over-energetic body of persons, sympathising with the revolutionists, prosecuted Eyre for cruelty, and the case created some commotion. On such occasions the emotional portion of the community is wont to lose its discretion in enthusiasm; and the present was an excellent opportunity for a sentimentalism which, perhaps, infected both parties. There was too much protestation all round. On the one side were ranged John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, Professors Huxley, Freeman, and Goldwin Smith, while Carlyle, Kingsley, Tennyson, and Mr. Ruskin were among a body of subscribers who originated an Eyre Defence Fund. Tennyson supported his contribution by a vigorous letter, in which he deprecated the unreasonableness of this controversial hysteria. 'I send my small subscription,' he said, 'as a tribute to the nobleness of the

man, and as a protest against the spirit in which a servant of the State, who has saved to us one of the islands of the Empire, and many English lives, seems to be hunted down.' The letter was characteristic of Tennyson, who always refused to be influenced by party cries and sectarian malice. It caused grave offence, however, to many ponderous and narrow-minded persons, who read into the discussion aims and sentiments altogether alien to the disputants.

Between 1864 and 1867 Tennyson made but one publication, a selection from his works in square duodecimo. This volume, issued in 1865, contained six new poems, 'The Captain,' 'On a Mourner,' 'Three Sonnets to a Coquette,' and a song, 'Home they brought him slain with spears,' an altered version of the song in 'The Princess,' rewritten for musical use. The new rendering has a charm of its own, from a certain allusiveness and a vagueness of suggestion which are more artistic than the fullest detail. The removal of the face-cloth and the strategy of the nurse are unrecorded. Only the child plays with his father's lance and shield, and in his game reminds her of her loss. Then with an outburst of grief she reproves him:

'O hush, my joy, my sorrow!'

There is a suddenness of pathos here which is irresistible. This version was many years afterwards published with a musical setting by Lady Tennyson.

The other additions are scarcely noteworthy. 'The Captain,' which is the most considerable of the five, is virile and spirited, but not noticeably Tennysonian.

But in 1867 Tennyson printed privately, at the press of Sir Ivor Bertie Guest at Canford Manor, Wimborne, an eminently graceful poem, 'The Window; or the Loves of the Wrens,' a little cantata, which he wrote, 'German-fashion,' for Sir—then Mr.—Arthur Sullivan's music. The original edition contained this dedication—

> 'These little songs, whose almost sole merit
> —at least till they are wedded to music—
> is that they are so excellently printed,
> I dedicate to the printer.'

It was a new experiment, and Tennyson's friends had fears. 'Is there a tune?' asked FitzGerald of the music, 'or originally melodious phrase in any of it?' And he adds, rather naïvely: 'that is what I always missed in Mendelssohn.' FitzGerald did not invariably doubt, however. He wrote to Sir W. F. Pollock in a very different strain. 'You might suggest,' he said, 'to Mr. Sullivan or some competent musician to adapt the Epilogue part of Tennyson's "King Arthur," beginning

> "And so to bed, where yet in sleep I seem'd
> To sail with Arthur,"

down to

> "And war shall be no more,"

—to adapt this, I say, to the music of that grand last scene in "Fidelio," beginning dreamily, and increasing, *crescendo*, up to where the Poet begins to feel the truth and stir of day, till Beethoven's pompous march should begin, and the chorus, with "Arthur is come."'

Apparently Sir Arthur Sullivan was not competent, to FitzGerald's taste, for original writing. But whatever the musical critic may have thought of his

setting of 'The Window,' there can be little question of the suitability of the lyrics to their object. They are melodious and varied, affording the composer infinite opportunity. Take, on the one hand, the sweep and whistle of the wind on the hill:

'Follow, follow the chase!
And my thoughts are as quick and as quick, ever on, on, on.
O lights, are you flying over her sweet little face?
And my heart is there before you are come, and gone,
When the winds are up in the morning!'

Contrast this with the cold, eager crispness of the description of winter:

'Bite, frost, bite!
The woods are all the searer,
The fuel is all the dearer,
The fires are all the clearer,
My spring is all the nearer,
You have bitten into the heart of the earth,
But not into mine.'

There is variety here, and to spare; but there is more to follow:

'The wind and the wet, the wind and the wet!
Wet west wind, how you blow, you blow!
And never a line from my lady yet!
Is it ay or no? is it ay or no?
Blow then, blow, and when I am gone,
The wet west wind and the world may go on.'

And again, as the love glows into life:

'Over the thorns and briers,
Over the meadows and stiles,
Over the world to the end of it,
Flash for a million miles.'

It is a medley of melody: and it would go hard with the composer who could not find 'a tune or an originally melodious phrase' to match such music.

The Canford Press issued, in the same year, another of the Laureate's works, 'The Victim,' which

made its public appearance a few months later in *Good Words* for January 1868.

There was another and a far stronger poem, finished at this time, but published later—'Lucretius.' Here was the direct outcome of the Swinburnian movement, the emancipation of poetry from the shackles of prudery. It portrays, dramatically and with a breathless violence, the ravings of the maddened Lucretius, for whom his wife has mixed a love-philtre. He raves against love and the Gods; he lashes himself into a frenzy, which at last draws the dagger against his life. At one moment he curses the animal passion, the next he revels in it:

'How the sun delights
To glance and shift about her slippery sides,
And rosy knees and supple roundedness
And budded bosom-peaks.'

This is that abandonment to physical beauty which swayed the Pre-Raphaelite school, and shocked and delighted the public who rushed to read *Poems and Ballads*. It shocked the publishers likewise. The proof-sheets of 'Lucretius' were sent out to America to secure simultaneous publication; and, when the poem appeared on May 2, 1868, in *Every Saturday*, in New York, the lines quoted above stood in the place they have subsequently filled. But meanwhile the prudery of the English publishers had emended the revise; and the poem was printed in *Macmillan's Magazine* without the risky suggestion of realism. It is an amusing evidence of the tenor of the time; for this shyness was not confined to the publishers. 'Lucretius' seemed, to his friends, also, too free for

Tennyson. 'Lucretius' Death,' said FitzGerald, 'is thought to be too free-spoken for publication, I believe: not so much in a religious as in an amatory point of view. I should have believed Lucretius more likely to have expedited his departure because of weariness of life and despair of the system, than because of any love-philtre.' No doubt. But Tennyson was only recurring to history in this, or, at any rate, to the account given by the Eusebian Chronicle. The story may have been invented to spite the Epicureans, but it remains the most direct report of the poet's death. 'Once get a name in England,' complained the same critic of the same poem, 'and you may do anything.' It is very unenlightened, all this criticism: it shows a complete want of appreciation for the circumstances. The true poet must catch the tenor of the time, and draw it to himself: he must broaden down slowly with precedent. It was the impulse of the moment to be frankly realistic: Tennyson was carried with the stream. In his course he reflected the surrounding life; and to reflect is not to imitate. His claim to individuality was attracting new attention; at this very moment Tennyson's reputation was spreading beyond his own countrymen. He was penetrating into the chateaux of France and the palaces of Italy. Octave Feuillet, describing in 'M. de Camors,' published in 1867, the daily life of a French country family, and describing it with a delicate faithfulness, pictured the household around the fire in the evening reading a new poem 'de Victor Hugo ou de Tennyson.' This was no making of a name in England alone; nor was

such a reputation one with which the writer could 'do anything.'

In July 1867 Tennyson was host to a grateful company, one of whom left a pleasant account of his visit. The Duke of Argyll, the Gladstones, and Lord Houghton, were of the party, and the latter wrote of his visit as follows:

'Our expedition to Tennyson's was a moral success, but a physical failure; for we had so bad a pair of posters that we regularly knocked up seven miles from the house, and should have had to walk there in the moonlight, if we had not met with a London cab. The bard was very agreeable, and his wife and son delightful He has built himself a very handsome and commodious house in a most inaccessible site, with every comfort he can require, and every discomfort to all who approach him What can be more poetical?'

Every new visitor seems to have shown the same enthusiasm; and in the following year Longfellow journeyed to Farringford, to pay, as he gracefully puts it, 'homage to the mastery, which is thine.' The impression of the meeting remains in 'Wapentake':

'Not of the howling dervishes of song,
Who maze their brain with the delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art.'

Tennyson's published work in 1868 was not considerable. 'The Victim,' a poem which almost suggests the touch of his American visitor, appeared in *Good Words* in January, with an illustration by A. Houghton; and in the same month *Once a Week* printed 'The Spiteful Letter.' In February, 'Wages' was issued in *Macmillan's Magazine*; and a poem

named '1865-1866,' since suppressed, in *Good Words* for March. Two months later 'Lucretius' made a tardy appearance in *Macmillan's Magazine.* The lust of identification has found a vent in several suggestions with reference to the original of 'The Spiteful Letter.' But the author's own authority establishes the certainty that no individual letter was intended. On December 24th, 1867, he wrote to *Once a Week*: 'It is no particular letter that I meant. I have had dozens of them from one quarter or another.'

The poem which appeared in *Good Words*—'1865-1866,'—is a strange voice of solitude, akin to 'Break, break, break,' and the earlier 'No More.' It is full of the lonely sentiment of midnight, as it cries to the storm with the inarticulate cry of discomfort.

> 'I stood on a tower in the wet,
> And New Year and Old Year met,
> And winds were roaring and blowing:
> And I said, "O years, that meet in tears,
> Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?"'

But there is no answer, nor any to regard. Only through the silence come the wailing of the waves and the moaning of the wind,

> 'Old Year roaring and blowing,
> And New Year blowing and roaring.'

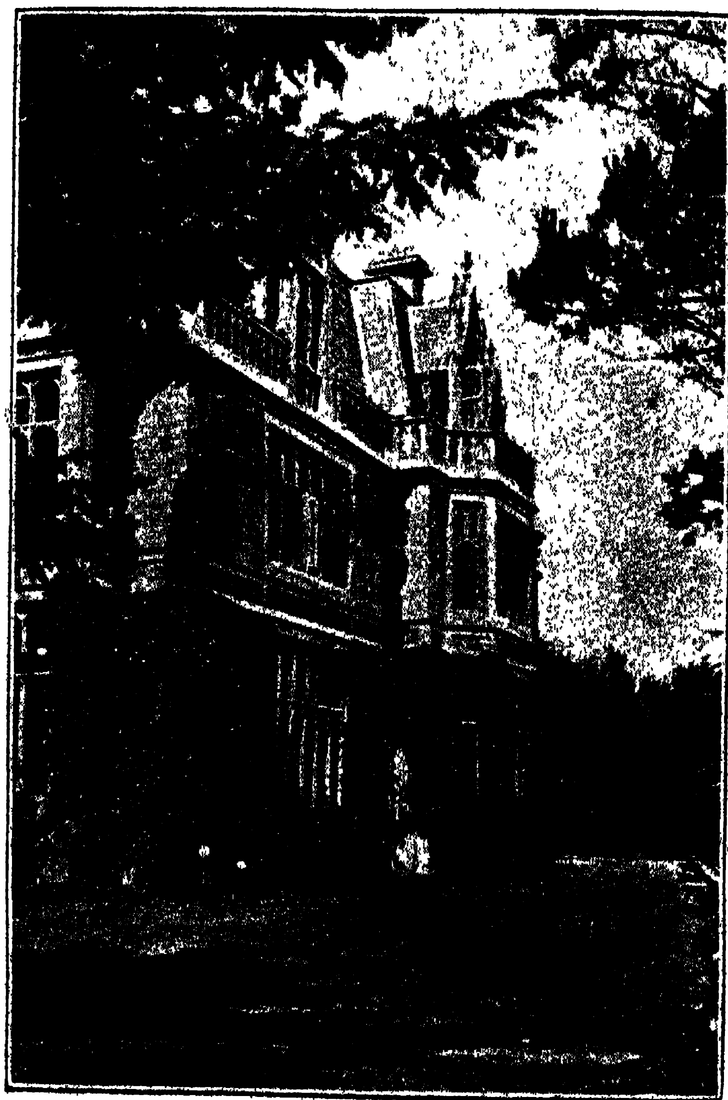
The poem is printed in a decorative frame, designed by John Leighton. Above, a watchman sits between two winged bells, backed by telegraph wires. Below, Boreas blows and roars *ore rotundo.* There is a picture, too: the poet, in a loose cloak and soft hat, stands on a rampart with a stormy sea below. It is a very bad picture indeed.

In February Tennyson paid a visit to Cambridge,

the second recorded since his undergraduate days. He stayed at Trinity, at the Lodge, and one evening dined, in the room which is now the guest-room, with Mr. W. G. Clark; the party including the Master of Trinity, Mr. W. Aldis Wright, and Mr. Pritchard, now Professor at Oxford, himself a neighbour of the Tennysons at Freshwater.

The next year saw the Tennysons thoroughly established at Aldworth; where in December 1869 Sir Frederick Pollock stayed with them, and heard the poet read the 'Holy Grail,' which was published at the close of the year, the volume including 'The Victim,' 'Wages,' and 'Lucretius.' At the same time 'Pelleas and Ettarre,' 'The Coming of Arthur,' and 'The Passing of Arthur' were added to the 'Idylls.' With this publication the poet returned to his own again. The 'Holy Grail' has been already discussed in its relation to the rest of the 'Idylls,' and little remains to be said in its praise. It will live as the purest, the most imaginative, and richly finished of the series,—a poem full of the deepest inspiration, and the most refined and lofty thought. It has passages which, for mystic fancy and power, are unsurpassed in the language.

Its appearance was followed by a little controversy. The Rev. Robert Stephen Hawker, Vicar of Morwenstowe, had already published in 1864 a poem called 'The Quest of the Sangreal,' which was itself no unworthy contribution to literature. The earlier author expressed some chagrin that Tennyson should have treated the same subject, fancying that he had the claim to consideration which belongs of right to



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the first in the field. It was generally felt, however, that the precedence lay with the other poet. Tennyson's 'Idylls' had been written and published long before Mr. Hawker's 'Sangreal'; and, in taking up his subject anew, Tennyson, it was held, was fairly continuing a scheme which he had himself originated. The discussion has little interest, save as an indication of the slight ground upon which a suspicion of plagiarism may be based.

The Tennyson of this time must have been much as the Tennyson of old. Even when, on occasional visits to London, he could be persuaded to dine in society, he would insist after dinner on retiring to smoke; and amusing stories are current of his being invaded, in the solitude of an upper room, or even a garret, by bands of ladies who were determined to chat with him. He was always at his best over his pipe. It was thus that Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie found him, in a top room in Eaton Square. 'There sat my friend,' she said, 'as I had first seen him years ago—in the clouds.' There was but little change from the Tennyson of thirty years before, whom William Howitt had sketched so clearly. 'You may come across him,' he had said, 'in a country inn, with a foot on each hob of the fireplace, a volume of Greek in one hand, his meerschaum in the other,—so far advanced towards the seventh heaven that he would not thank you to call him back into this nether world.' The old hour, and the old port wine still claimed him. 'I have the great honour,' wrote Lord Houghton to his aunts on the 27th of March 1870, 'of entertaining Tennyson at dinner to-morrow.

He insists on dining at seven, and on having some old port. I have brought some from Fryston, which my father called "The Alderman," which is, I suppose, from the year when that horse won the St. Leger.' The poet was always conservative in his taste, as in his sentiments.

In 1870 Tennyson lost an old friend: Sir John Simeon died at Fribourg in Switzerland. The body was brought home to be buried; and a week elapsed between the time of its home-bringing and the day of the funeral. It was during this interval that Tennyson, walking 'in the garden at Swainston,' composed the exquisite lyric which bears that title. The sense of desolation within brought a feeling of loss without. 'The Prince of Courtesy' was dead.

'Two dead men have I known
  In courtesy like to thee:
Two dead men have I loved
  With a love that ever will be:
Three dead men have I loved, and thou art last of the three.'

This poem was first included in a cabinet edition of Tennyson's works, published by Messrs. H. S. King and Co., in 1874, a collection which was also enriched by the first appearance of 'The Voice and the Peak,' and 'England and America in 1872.' An addition of about 150 words to 'Merlin and Vivien' was now made for the first time.

The next year (1871) saw the publication of 'The Last Tournament,' a poem which caught, more closely even than 'Lucretius,' the spirit of the new poetry. The novelty was still unfamiliar. The public prudery, which had caused the correction in

'Lucretius,' led to another very similar alteration in 'The Last Tournament. The lines

> 'He rose, he turn'd, then, flinging round her neck,
> Claspt it, and cried, "Thine order, O my Queen!"
> But while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd throat,
> Out of the dark,' etc.

stood in the original version, printed in *The Contemporary Review*, as follows:

> 'He rose, he turn'd, then, flinging round her neck,
> Claspt it, but while he bow'd himself to lay
> Warm kisses in the hollow of her throat,' etc.

This was thought too realistic; and yet, here again, the old was better. Even FitzGerald yielded to the dramatic power and energy of 'The Last Tournament.' 'He never ceases to be noble and pure,' he said.

In 1872 Messrs. Strahan and Co. published a six-volume library edition of the Laureate's poems. In this collection several of the 'Juvenilia' were restored, and the two sonnets 'Alexander' and 'The Bridesmaid' took their place among his approved work. 'The Third of February 1852' was also added, this being the first acknowledgment of its authorship; and 'Literary Squabbles'—the original 'Afterthought' in *Punch*—was now reprinted. The opening verses of 'Idylls of the King,' which are addressed 'To the Queen,' made a first appearance in the same edition.

Meanwhile 'Gareth and Lynette' was undergoing its finishing touches: and in November Tennyson read it to Robert Browning and to Mr. Knowles. It was published in the following year, and highly praised by *The Spectator* and *The Athenæum*. In the autumn which preceded its appearance Tennyson was travelling in Norway, and left a vivid impression

upon those who met him. The year after his visit, the late Professor Ludwig K. Daa, the distinguished Norwegian journalist and politician, himself a great lover of all things English, told Mr. Edmund Gosse that he had had the pleasure of showing the points of interest in Christiania to Tennyson; but that his extreme near sight had prevented him from undertaking a journey into the interior, which would have had to be made by karjol. Professor Daa recorded, with patriotic satisfaction, the profound impression produced on the English poet by the voyage up the romantic harbour of Christiania.

With 'Gareth and Lynette' the period of the 'Idylls' closed, to be re-opened, for one moment only, thirteen years later, with the publication of 'Balin and Balan.' In 1874 'A Welcome to Marie Alexandrovna' was printed, first on a single sheet, and subsequently in *The Times*.

The poem caused some discontent, for reasons which it is difficult to revive; and *The Examiner* printed an exceedingly uncourteous comment on 'A Welcome to Alexandrovna.' The anonymous poet addressed Her Majesty to this effect:

'Victoria, mother of the English race,
I, Tennyson, thy poet, one thing lack.
Long since I owed my pension to thy grace;
Give me its ancient comrade now, *The Sack*.'

The discontent and its cause are forgotten now; the verses remain as a memento of 'the spites and the follies.' The little discussion lived out its nine days' life, and then Tennyson entered upon a new phase of work. For the next few years he was to be principally occupied upon Drama.

CHAPTER X

QUEEN MARY AND *HAROLD*

THAT Tennyson should have determined to give his attention to Drama can scarcely occasion surprise. Step by step, as this study has attempted to show, his work had been advancing towards dramatic art. The literary movement which he represented was essentially dramatic; it always aimed at passing out of itself into the sufferings and achievements of others. It was so with 'Aurora Leigh,' it was so with 'Men and Women,' and it was equally so with 'Maud' and 'Idylls of the King.' But the dramatic talent has two distinct issues, the one physiological, the other psychological. To write a strong and successful drama the author must possess the power of identifying himself with motives and sensations alien to himself; he must hold the faculty of living the life he represents. This faculty is bestowed by the psychological side of the dramatic talent. But there is the other side, which (for want of a more distinctive title) may be called the physiological: the sense of action, of situation, of movement. Without these two elements a sound drama cannot be produced; the sense of action and situation, standing alone, prompts to melodrama; the sense of analysis

standing alone, works out a psychological study—intense, but undramatic.

The poets of the new movement, which was opening in 1842, had enough and to spare of the psychological side of dramatic art. For a proof of this the reader needs only to turn to 'Bianca among the Nightingales,' and 'A Year's Spinning' in the one case, and to 'Mr. Sludge the Medium,' and 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' in the other. With Tennyson he has always 'Maud' and 'The Northern Farmer' to refer to. Here was an infinite psychology; but the sense of action and situation was scarcely a strong characteristic of the new school. There is movement and incident in 'Strafford,' but there is a want of unity in the conception; the events leap out of the poet's store *pêle mêle*: the sense of situation is lacking. 'In a Balcony' has much more vigour and concentration, but 'In a Balcony' is not a drama. It is merely a broken scene, as it were, from a play of vast possibility. The psychological element in the Brownings and in Tennyson overpowered the physiological, and it was this tendency to mental analysis that prevented Tennyson from realising the expectations of his admirers, when he turned his attention to pure drama. The period of the dramas, extending over ten years, is a period of brilliant intellectual success, of artistic and dramatic failure. The workmanship of the dramas stands above all question. There are passages of nervous but virile energy, such as are scarcely to be found elsewhere in his work: there are evidences of a grasp on character that becomes at intervals Shakespearian.

But the faculty that made Shakespeare a dramatist is usually lacking to Tennyson; he misses the necessity of progress and the obligation of action. In two instances he combined both elements; but three out of his five plays are sketches of character, psychological analyses, studies in motive. Without action, and without the technical sense of construction, they can never be dramas.

'Queen Mary,' the first of the series, is also the longest. The first glance at the list of *dramatis personæ* is bewildering; there are forty-five characters, without the supernumeraries. The other plays are less encumbered: 'Harold' has twenty-three, and 'Becket' twenty-five *personæ.* 'The Falcon,' 'The Cup,' and 'The Promise of May,' have comparatively small casts. But of the forty-five characters in 'Queen Mary' very few play important parts in the drama; not more than a dozen of the figures are intimately concerned with the action of the play. A brief survey of the drama will give some idea of its development.

The play opens with Queen Mary's coronation, and immediately transfers its interest to Cranmer, who stands in immediate danger, since his name is among those who signed the Letters Patent conferring the crown on Lady Jane Grey. Cranmer, in contradiction to the advice of Peter Martyr, refuses to fly. The scene then changes to St. Paul's Cross, where Father Bourne is preaching; while Noailles, the French Ambassador, moves about the crowd, whispering of the curse of Papacy, and advocating the claim of Elizabeth to the Crown. The fourth

scene transfers the action to the palace. Courtenay, Earl of Devon, being ambitious for the Crown, is uncertain whether to win Mary or to league with Noailles, Suffolk, Carew, and Wyatt, in an attempt to make the Spanish marriage an excuse for overthrowing Mary and setting Elizabeth on the throne. He is approaching Elizabeth, when Mary interrupts them, and, suspecting her sister's faith, orders her into comparative exile at Ashridge. Another change of scene brings us to Mary's room in the Palace, where she muses amorously over Philip's miniature. Her love for him is fixed; and the entreaties and expostulations of Gardiner and Noailles have no influence with her. Simon Renard, the Spanish ambassador, is next introduced. He whispers his distrust of Elizabeth, and assures Mary of Philip's love. His assurance is fortified by the sudden arrival of Philip's letter, offering his hand to Mary. The Queen passes into the Council Chamber to declare her decision, and a few minutes later staggers back, half swooning, with the cry—

'My Philip is all mine!'

The second act opens with the hint of insurrection. Sir Thomas Wyatt, absorbed upon his father's sonnets at Alington Castle, is upbraided by Antony Knyvett for indolence at a moment of peril. The new comer brings Wyatt a letter in Courtenay's cipher, announcing the flight of Carew and the expected capture of the Duke. The bad news is lightened by the assurance that Courtenay is still with the insurgents. This letter stirs Wyatt to a show of energy,

and from his window he addresses a fiery speech to the mob, urging them to resist the advances of Spain. In this way mischief is set afoot, and the second scene gives Mary's account of the rising, delivered to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen assembled. The Queen reiterates to them her determination to marry Philip, inviting their confidence in the surety that, unless she knew that this step were best for the State, she would not entertain the proposal. The scene closes on a general oath of allegiance, and a note of distrust from Sir Ralph Bagenhall. A short scene on London Bridge shows Wyatt in full rebellion, with an hundred pounds offered for his arrest. A fourth change transfers the action to Westminster Palace, whither news comes of the successful advance of the insurgents. Courtenay advises the Queen's flight, when a messenger announces that the tide of the struggle has turned, and the insurrection is crushed. A further report declares Courtenay and the Princess Elizabeth to be parties to the rising, and the Queen orders both to the Tower. Even for her sister she knows no mercy.

'She shall die,'

she says;

'My foes are at my feet, and Philip King.'

The third act opens at the conduit in Gracechurch, where a conversation between Sir Ralph Bagenhall and Sir Thomas Stafford gives opportunity to the former to describe the marriage of Philip and Mary. The procession then passes, Gardiner urging the mob the while to shout 'Philip and Mary,' in approval of the union. The play then stands still for some time

while Bagenhall recounts the execution of Lady Jane Grey. In the scene that follows in Whitehall we learn the downfall of Cranmer. The scene concludes with the hopeful intimation that Queen Mary has conceived a child. In the Great Hall in Whitehall on St. Andrew's Day the Peers are next assembled; and Gardiner pleads with Rome for pardon for the nation's schism and separation from the Church. Cardinal Pole replies, and pronounces absolution, the whole assembly falling on its knees. Bagenhall alone refuses to bow down, and is committed to the Tower. The fourth scene, also laid in the Palace, spends itself in a long discussion of religious tolerance between Mary, Gardiner, Pole, Paget, and Bonner, ending in the condemnation of Cranmer, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, Rogers, and Ferrar. The next move is to Woodstock, where Elizabeth is banished: and the early part of the scene is occupied with a milkmaid's song and the Princess's comments. A command is brought to Elizabeth from Mary, ordering her to repair to town to wed Prince Philibert of Savoy, and after some reluctance she determines to obey. In the next scene, in the Palace, we learn from Philip that Elizabeth is indisposed to the match, but that he himself is determined to see it effected. Simon Renard begs him to show a more amenable temper to his Queen, as it is a matter of public comment that her barrenness wearies him. Philip then prepares to bid farewell to Mary, as he is summoned to his father at Brussels; but Mary entreats him so eagerly to stay another day that he finally accedes, with an absolutely loveless frigidity.

At the commencement of the fourth act Cardinal Pole brings the Queen a petition begging her to spare Cranmer; and she is presently waited on by a further deputation, consisting of Thirlby, Paget, and Lord William Howard. Mary declines, however, to show any mercy, and orders the writ to be made out that night. The next scene takes us to Oxford, where Cranmer lies in prison. He has determined to recant, with a fearful yearning for life, when he learns from Thirlby that he is still to die. In a powerful speech he curses the right hand that has wronged him, and dooms it to the first flame at the stake. The act closes before St. Mary's Church at Oxford, whence Cranmer, after some of the finest eloquence in the drama, is led away to death. His end is recounted by Peters; and the act closes with Paget's epitaph on the Bishop—

'Come out, my Lord, it is a world of fools.'

The last act finds Philip once more in the act of parting from Mary. He desires her to declare war with France, and to proclaim Elizabeth heir, since she stands between Mary and the Queen of Scots. Mary consents and begs Philip to remain; but he is obdurate. Weary of the childless love of his wife, he reflects that Elizabeth would make him a more acceptable queen; and he decides that, for this reason, he will prevent the marriage he had contemplated between her and Philibert of Savoy. The scene ends with the news that war has been declared against France, owing to her encouragement of a petty insurrection by Stafford, who has landed at Scarborough,

In the second scene Pole receives a summons to Rome to reply to an accusation of heresy. Then follows news of loss upon the Continent, and Mary prays that Calais may at least be spared her. At this juncture Feria arrives from Philip. The King has heard with pleasure that the Queen expects the birth of a child, and promises that he will soon be with her. Then the wrath of the Queen is stirred; and she knows that Philip is avoiding her. In the next scene Feria approaches Elizabeth, to suggest the possibility of her marriage with Philip. He mentions the Queen's serious illness; and Elizabeth at once refuses to listen to him till she has hurried to her sister. There follows a suggestive picture of the outside of the Palace, with the voices of the night passing and re-passing with news of the Queen's danger. In the last and most dramatic scene of all, Mary lies dying, heart-broken. She sighs that on her death two names will be found graven on her heart, 'Philip and Calais'; while on Philip's (if, indeed, he have a heart), the name of 'Philip' will stand alone. In the frenzy of death she springs from her couch to slash his face from the portrait above her, and so is borne out to die. The word of her death is brought by Elizabeth, who is at once hailed Queen, and the play ends with a sombre voice of omen—

> '*Bagenhall.* God save the Crown! the Papacy is no more.
> *Paget* (*aside*). Are we so sure of that?
> *Acclamation.* God save the Queen!'

It is the misfortune of so naked an outline as this that it must show the drama at its worst. But a fuller

account could not serve to hide the principal deficiency in construction. The story itself is not of the elements which go to make a great play. The interest is diffused through two periods of mental tension: the first during the time in which Mary is aspiring to secure Philip; the second, while she is hoping against hope for the birth of a child. Now, the motive of a prolonged mental tension is not a dramatic motive. The strain of the situation cannot be portrayed vividly and with animation; the drama wastes away in an atmosphere of hope deferred. The motive which, duly developed, might have given life and spirit to the play—the gradual weariness of Philip for his wife —is slurred over within the limit of one short scene. Everything centres round the childlessness of the Queen; and the situation is not only unpleasant, but radically undramatic. The multiplication of unimportant incidents hinders the development of character; Mary stands out conspicuously; but Philip sinks into the shade. Tennyson gives us, indeed, a very real Mary: sensuous, obstinate, passionate, suspicious. She is traced, with a vigorous touch, through her two great periods of longing,—breaking out into a triumphant cry when the insurgents are beaten back, and Philip is secured to her; sinking into an almost inspired hysteria when she first believes that she is to bear a child. For him every power is to be propitious:

> 'His sceptre shall go forth from Ind to Ind!
> His sword shall hew the heretic peoples down!
> His faith shall clothe the world that will be his,
> Like universal air and sunshine! Open,
> Ye everlasting gates! The King is here!—
> My star, my son!'

And again her dying passion leaps into fire, as the face of Philip mocks her deathbed from his portrait:

> 'This Philip shall not
> Stare in upon me in my haggardness;
> Old, miserable, diseased,
> Incapable of children. Come thou down.
> Lie there. O God, I have kill'd my Philip!'

The cold, unscrupulous Spaniard was not worth such a passion as this. An unsympathetic schemer, with no care for her, and no love for the country of his adoption, he repels interest from the outset. And during the entire drama it is rather his influence that moves in the background than his presence that vitalises the story.

Cranmer has one grand scene, clothed, with a singular fidelity, in language almost identical with his recorded words. Simon Renard is allowed little prominence: Pole has a quiet faith in himself that the distrust of Rome cannot destroy.

> 'I have done my best, and as a faithful son,
> That all day long hath wrought his father's work,
> When back he comes at evening hath the door
> Shut on him by the father whom he loved,
> His early follies cast into his teeth,
> And the poor son turn'd out into the street
> To sleep, to die—I shall die of it, cousin.'

Elizabeth is colourless.

The play was produced in a condensed form, the year after its publication, when Mr. Irving gave it a trial at the Lyceum. It was first played on the 18th of April 1876, Miss Bateman (Mrs. Crowe) representing Queen Mary, while Mr. Henry Irving appeared as Philip. It was not to be expected that it would succeed, and the critical organs

of the day said their worst for it. *The Era* found it 'an unsatisfactory play, wanting in stamina, and altogether deficient in interest.' Interest of a sort it could not lack: for the dialogue is strong and, on occasion, intensely dramatic. It would be impossible, indeed, for Tennyson to write anything that was 'altogether deficient in interest.' But it did lack motive, and it was innocent, moreover, of dramatic construction. Scene followed scene, to lead the history forward without promoting the direct progress of the play; the whole drama was a painful tension long drawn out. History rarely lends itself to drama. Had he to stand or fall by the reputation of 'Richard the Second' and 'Henry the Eighth,' Shakespeare himself would fare little better than Tennyson with 'Queen Mary.'

The early years of the dramatic period were undisturbed by event. Mrs. Procter relates how Tennyson would drop in upon her at Beach House, Freshwater, about eleven in the morning, and sit gossiping for an hour or two, at which time they would take a walk together. FitzGerald, too, gives a delightful description of a visit from the Laureate, the first for many years. He found little enough change in his friend. 'There seemed not a day's interval between. He looked very well and very happy, having with him his eldest son, a very nice fellow.' One evening during his stay, Tennyson was much distressed by a newspaper paragraph, which commented ungraciously on the poet's refusal to allow Longfellow to quote from his poems. He sat down on the spot and wrote a letter of explanation. 'So,'

added FitzGerald, 'my house is so far become a palace, being the place of a dispatch from one poet to another, all over that Atlantic.' While he was at Woodbridge, Tennyson hinted to his host that he was writing another drama: but FitzGerald discouraged him. 'He should rest on his oars, or ship them for good now, I think'; and then he recurs to the 1842 volume, and the old creed. His attitude was certainly consistent.

In the same year Tennyson wrote to Archbishop Trench, thanking him genially for his present of a copy of *Sacred Latin Poetry*, for which he expresses extreme admiration; alluding, too, to a Latin chorus of his own, which was never published. And in 1876 the names of Browning and Tennyson, so many times connected in this little study, are united by a warm tribute of affection. Browning, publishing a selection from his work in two volumes, dedicated it to the Laureate in hearty terms:

'TO

ALFRED TENNYSON

In Poetry—illustrious and consummate,
In Friendship—noble and sincere.'

During the early days of the next year Tennyson took a house in town for three months, where Lord Houghton found him invariably the same. On March 28th Tennyson dined with his old friend to meet Mr. Gladstone, at the same hour as of old. 'He will only dine out at seven; and all society has to submit to the idiosyncrasy of the poetic digestion.'



At p. 22

In 1877 the new drama appeared; and it is interesting to note that it was sympathetically reviewed in *The Academy* by Mr. John Addington Symonds. The same paper had, two years before, intrusted the consideration of 'Queen Mary' to Mr. Andrew Lang. The last-named critic had noticed in the Tudor tragedy an evidence of 'powers unguessed at, and as yet scarcely appreciated'; and this half-hidden talent had, in the interval, opened into vitality. From every possible point of view 'Harold' was a singular advance upon 'Queen Mary.' The dialogue was more vivid and vigorous; the characters were sketched with keener confidence and with bolder touches; and the construction was quite unexpectedly improved. The play no longer dallied through long passages of dialogue without advancing the story; every scene, as Mr. Symonds pointed out at the time, leads the plot 'by successive stages to the final catastrophe.' And the poet had found, too, a theme which was full of tragic pathos and dramatic situation: a theme which gave opportunity to the psychologist, without robbing the dramatist of his opportunity. 'Harold' is, in fact, a great drama. And yet, in the strange contrariety of events, 'Harold' has never been seen on the stage.

A review of the incidents will show how powerful is the physique of the play.

The tragedy opens at the palace in London, where Aldwyth, widow of Griffyth, King of Wales, Gamel, a Northumbrian Thane, and a circle of courtiers are watching from the window a great comet which hangs over the castle. The air is full of superstition, and it

is whispered that ill is boded by the portent. Then Harold joins them. He is sick of the sedentary life, —'work-wan, flesh-fallen,'—he longs to go abroad to hawk and hunt. He has no sympathy with the fears and apprehensions of the Court: he knows the comet is a natural element. He shows his character at once —strong, manly, vigorous; with a sense of the obligation of truth and honour. 'Better die than lie,' he says. His energy and strength contrast pleasantly with the moody, dreamful superstition of Edward the Confessor, who is next introduced to the scene. The King is full of visionary qualms and mysticism: for him 'heaven and earth are threads of the same loom, every earthly sign has its counterpart in heavenly import. But his absorption into mystery does not prevent him from taking an interest in the affairs of State; and when Harold begs for leave to go to Normandy to hunt and hawk, the King denies him with determination, and at last gives but a reluctant permission. There follows a suggestion of treachery in the North,—a suggestion which raises the wrath of Tostig, Earl of Northumbria and brother to Harold. He is the spoilt child of Godwin; and, in his pettish outburst, he swears that Harold shall never be king, if he can help it. The scene ends with a significant passage between Aldwyth and Gamel. He loves Griffyth's widow, and she encourages his hope; holding out the condition that he shall secure Tostig's downfall.

The second scene is laid in the garden of the King's house near London, where Edith, Edward's ward, is singing to the sunset. There follows a pas-

sionate love-scene between her and Harold. Aldwyth, anxious to separate them, has urged Edith to the convent life; but Harold silences the suggestion with a kiss:

> 'Thou art *my* nun, thy cloister in mine arms.'

Edith is full of fears for Harold, for his visit to Flanders and the enmity of Tostig; but, as she tries to insist on the significance of her dreams, Harold once more puts the superstition by. It is a fresh, virile love-scene, with a strong ending, where Harold glancing in fancy from the bells of his hawk, suggests

> 'Other bells on earth, which yet are heaven's;
> Guess what they be.
> *Edith.* He cannot guess who knows.
> Farewell, my king.
> *Harold.* Not yet, but then—my queen.'

As the lovers pass, Aldwyth, like a shadow, slips from the thicket. In a jealous outburst she reveals that, as she hated Griffyth, she loves Harold, that she merely plays on Gamel to her own end. Suddenly Morcar of Mercia joins her. He is eaten up with ambition: and she promises him that, if he will flash the report about Northumbria that Harold loves her, she will help him to an earldom. Morcar, in joy at the thought that to be an earl is to be a step nearer the throne, closes the unholy compact.

The second act opens on the sea-shore of Ponthieu, where Harold and his crew are wrecked, and haled before Guy, Count of Ponthieu. The latter sends Harold to William of Normandy, whose prisoner we find him in the next scene—at Bayeux. William

is bent on ruling England, and he sees that the trusty spirit of Harold may help him to his desire. In these words he condenses his project:

> 'I want his voice in England for the crown,
> I want thy voice with him to bring him round;
> And being brave he must be subtly cow'd,
> And being truthful wrought upon to swear
> Vows that he dare not break. England our own
> Thro' Harold's help, he shall be my dear friend.'

This is strong enough, and determined enough; but the weak, inconsistent side of William is shown at the very moment of his protestation, in the ease with which he yields to the baby demand of the young Rufus. There is no stability in this deep-mouthed Norman, who compares but feebly with the rough English energy of Harold. He, cooped like a lark in a cage, sighs for 'Free air! free field!' and William promises him his return, on certain conditions. Harold shies at the word, but Malet urges him to yield. 'But what,' says Harold, 'if they be dishonourable?' 'Seem to obey him,' answers Malet: and again comes the firm, unhesitating answer, 'Better die than lie.' On a sudden comes news from England. The North is in rebellion; Tostig has murdered Gamel.

> 'My God!' cried Harold, 'I should be there,
> I'll hack my way to the sea.'

But he is faced by another false friend, Wulfnoth, his brother. This spiritless little craven urges him to accede to William's wish; but Harold, after a moment's weakness, repulses the suggestion. The further persuasion of William proves too much, however, and Harold promises, knowing that he lies, to

advance the Norman's claim to the English crown. The moment he is alone he hates himself; and tries to argue that he may break his word:

> 'Is "ay" an oath? is "ay" strong as an oath?
> Or is it the same sin to break my word
> As break mine oath?'

The doubt is decided for him. The great doors open and discover William enthroned. Then Harold, with his hand upon the ark which holds the bones of the holy saints of Normandy, is forced to give the oath:

> 'I swear to help thee to the crown of England.'

The word is sworn now, and Harold is miserable:

> 'Am I Harold, Harold, son of our great Godwin?
> I am utter craven.'

The third act opens in London, where, in the Palace, Edward is found lying on a couch sick. His Queen, Harold, Aldwyth and Edith are with him. Harold is still saddened by the memory of his lie; the comfort of his friends and the absolution of the bishop cannot persuade him but that he is forsworn.

Leofwin argues,

> 'Of all the lies that men have ever lied,
> Thine is the pardonablest.'

But Harold's answer is without conviction:

> 'I think it so, I think I am a fool
> To think it can be otherwise than so.'

Suddenly Edward, always visionary, wakes from a dream which has foretold to him the doom of England. He bursts into a frenzy of religious hysteria, at the end of which he sinks back into reason, to appoint Harold his successor. But he has one condition—

Harold must remain unwed: he must not marry Edith. It is the old superstition that virginity alone is pure, but Harold's view is wider. He refuses to comply, and Edward curses them. Aldwyth, subtly cunning, wishes Harold had sworn, since it would have comforted the King; but Harold sums the situation into three words. 'We so loved,' he says; and the argument is sound.

Their discussion is ended by one last cry of the King's. He wakes from his last vision, his eyes filled with the prophetic scene of Harold's death:

'Sanguelac! Sanguelac! the arrow! the arrow!'

With a cry he falls back dead; and the scene changes to the garden, where Harold and Edith plight their eternal troth.

The fourth act moves the action to Northumbria, where Harold is with his forces quelling an insurrection. The scheme of Morcar has prospered and Aldwyth gains her end. For England's sake Harold offers her a loveless union, and she is content. 'The day is won,' she whispers, as the army moves forward to Stamford Bridge.

After one short scene between Tostig and Harold, in which the latter strives to turn his brother's mind, the play passes to a banquet after the battle of Stamford Bridge, full of the mirth of feasting. But the shadows are closing round Harold now. He who scorned superstition is becoming nervous and moody at the end. Tostig's hand seems to pass across his cup as he raises it to drink: his soul is heavy with sorrow for the brother who has fallen. And just as

the health of Harold and Aldwyth is passing round the board, a Thane from Pevensey staggers into the hall with the word that William of Normandy has landed. So with sudden haste and confusion the banquet is broken up, and the act closes on Harold's order to horse.

At the opening of the last act Harold is discovered seated in his tent, with the field of Senlac in the distance. The Monk Margot has come to urge him to yield to Rome, who has given encouragement to the claim of William. But Harold repudiates Rome's authority. Enraged, he cries:

> 'Back to that juggler,
> Tell him the Saints are nobler than he dreams,
> Tell him that God is nobler than the Saints,
> And tell him we stand arm'd on Senlac Hill,
> And bide the doom of God.'

Left alone, he falls asleep; and the ghosts of Edward, Wulfroth, Tostig, and the Norman Saints move across his dream to foretell his death.

> 'Sanguelac! Sanguelac! the arrow! the arrow!

As he springs from his couch, maddened by the vision, Edith is with him. Before they can take farewell, Aldwyth endeavours to part them; but Harold is true to the old love at last. In a tenderly pathetic scene they say their last good-bye, and Harold passes to his death with the words:

> 'Look, I will bear thy blessing into the battle,
> And front the doom of God.'

Then the progress of the fight is reported by the bystanders, while their voices of hope and fear mingle

with the weird chanting of the canons. The battle sways and varies, till the last bitter moment. Edith looks across the hill for Harold, but the Archbishop calls her to turn her eyes.

> 'Sanguelac! Sanguelac! the arrow, the arrow! away!'

The tragedy closes at night on the field of the dead. Edith and Aldwyth have come to look for Harold's body, and Edith is maddened now. She raves incoherently of her love and marriage, and desperately draws the ring from the finger of the dead, to wed herself to him:

> 'And thou,—
> Thy wife am I for ever and evermore.'

So she dies with him; and William, who even by his foe's dead body, can find no good word to say of him, turns to Aldwyth and promises her a kindly treatment. She, the crafty schemer, is left alone: all her plans have miscarried, all her hopes are belied. It is too heavy for her:

> 'My punishment is more than I can bear.'

It is impossible to show in a bare analysis how completely 'Harold' satisfies the requisities of tragedy; but this rapid glance will prove that every scene is intimately connected with the theme, the gradual rise and fall of the fortunes of 'Harold.' Until his marriage with Aldwyth his star is rising, from that point it begins a rapid and fatal decline. The turning-point in his life, however, is the moment of his first lie. From that time he has lost his trust in himself, and begins to weaken into superstition. Had he been true to himself, false sentiment had never made

him false to Edith. Before that, all his life is built of truth and honesty:

'In mine earldom
A man may hang gold bracelets on a bush,
And leave them for a year, and coming back
Find them again.'

And again the hot English blood boils up within him, when William tortures a subject who had abused his rule:

'In mine own land I should have scorned the man,
Or lash'd his rascal back, and let him go.'

The wide-minded spirit of chivalry chafes, too, at the thousand little exigencies of doctrine. He is above priestcraft:

'Oh God! I cannot help it, but at times
They seem to me too narrow, all the faiths
Of this grown world of ours, whose baby eye
Saw them sufficient.'

This is Harold: open, chivalrous, wide-minded, yielding but once to temptation, and ruined for life by a lie. From that moment petty fears and false sentiments get hold of him; only at the last he triumphs. Before he goes out to die, he recognises the faithfulness and the desert of Edith. And in their death they are not divided.

Aldwyth, cunning and ambitious, with one redeeming feature—her passion for Harold,—serves as the evil influence of the drama. She is not unhumanly evil: it is only in her treatment of Edith that she becomes hateful. And even there, her love for her dead king covers, or at any rate excuses, a multitude of abuses.

Edith is saved from the position of a merely

tender, uninfluential girl by the final stress of her love. The wild woman fighting for the body of Harold is a strange development of the simple, trustful maid, singing of love and hope in the garden. Her character is perhaps the most dramatic in the play; she changes during its course from girlhood to womanhood, from meekness to strength.

William of Normandy has no redeeming feature. He is brutal and unscrupulous, cloaking his treachery with an assumption of friendship; he is unchivalrous, even to the insult of his foe's dead body. In arousing our sympathy for Harold, Tennyson is careful to excite our contempt for his successor.

These four characters carry the drama between them. Tostig and Wulfroth have some importance, but their characters are not subtle. Tostig is the spoiled boy grown man, wayward and uncertain; selfish,—even to an aspiration towards the kingdom. Wulfroth is a coward pure and simple, without life or spirit.

The play is as rich in character as in action. It is to be hoped that it may yet be seen upon the London stage.

CHAPTER XI

THE FALCON AND *THE CUP*

THE publication of 'Harold' was followed by two years of comparative silence. During 1877 and 1878 Tennyson's work was confined to contributions to *The Nineteenth Century*, the first number of which, edited by Mr. J. T. Knowles, the friend upon whose plans Aldworth was built, appeared in March 1877. It bore as a prelude the Laureate's introductory sonnet, and during the same year the new review was enriched by the sonnets 'Montenegro' and 'To Victor Hugo,' and the lines translated from the eighteenth Iliad, 'Achilles over the Trench.' But the thirteenth number (March 1878) contained a far more notable poem, 'Sir Richard Grenville: a Ballad of the Fleet,' subsequently re-named 'The Revenge.' This poem stands in a class alone, side by side with 'The Charge of the Light Brigade,' 'The Voyage of Maeldune,' 'The Defence of Lucknow,' and 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade.' These five pieces bear witness to us of a Tennyson too little realised, a man with the soul of action and 'the heart of fire.' To read them seems to give reason to FitzGerald's early vision of the poet, standing, by Henry Hallam's shoulder, to the guns on the Martello Tower. None

of them is so breathlessly violent, so eager, so man fully English as 'The Revenge,' which owes certain of its details to Sir Walter Raleigh's 'Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of the Azores this last summer betwixt *The Revenge* and an Armada of the King of Spain.' It sounds like a war-song on one of Kingsley's themes, set to the roaring music of the blast of that 'chivalrous and cheery horn' which stirs the spirit of Mr. Andrew Lang. It has no less vigour than 'Hervé Riel,' over which, perhaps, it triumphs by a clearer enunciation. There is nothing more virile in literature than Sir Richard Grenville's cry to death:

'We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner, sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!'

'Eh! he has got the grip of it!' cried Carlyle. It is the grip that was meant to write the war-songs of a nation; and we cannot but regret that Tennyson has sung so little to this strain.

A year later, in April 1879, he recaptured the breathless spirit of adventure in another contribution to *The Nineteenth Century*. 'The Defence of Lucknow' is eager, nervous, and rapid. The excitement never dies down, the strain of energy holds to the last line. Browning, it is said, was once asked whether he did not consider that 'The Revenge' owed something of its inspiration to his own 'Hervé

Riel,' but he set the suggestion aside at once. 'Tennyson's inspiration,' he said, 'is his own.' Still the poems are, as it were, twin brothers, alike in form and disposition.

In the spring of 1879, on the 25th of April, Charles Tennyson Turner died at Cheltenham. 'I was writing only yesterday,' wrote FitzGerald, on the 18th of May, 'to persuade Spedding to insist on Macmillan publishing a complete edition of Charles's sonnets: graceful, tender, beautiful, and quite original little things.' The collection appeared in the following year,—published, however, by Mr. Kegan Paul. It was introduced by Spedding, and prefaced by the Laureate's poem, 'At Midnight, June 30, 1879,' to which reference has already been made. The little volume is a delightful union of the old and the young generation. It contains Samuel Taylor Coleridge's comments, written by him in his own earlier copy of the sonnets, and the whole is edited by the Laureate's son, Mr. Hallam Tennyson. Several copies of the earlier volume claim to be Coleridge's original, but errors in transcription put two, at least, out of court. The copy in the British Museum was long believed to be the genuine one; but Mr. J. Dykes Campbell has proved the notes to be written in another hand than Coleridge's.

Charles Tennyson's life was a very peaceful one, centred in the interest of his parish at Grasby. There he left behind him an affectionate regard, and other permanent records of his care. He not only rebuilt the vicarage, but restored the church and schools. He published three volumes of poems—

'Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces' in 1830, 'Sonnets' in 1864, and 'Sonnets, Lyrics, and Translations' in 1873. His wife survived him but a single month.

During the present year (1879), Alfred Tennyson's muse was not unfruitful. 'The Lover's Tale,' treated earlier in this study, was now first published in its complete form, making a thin volume of ninety-five pages. American piracy, reproducing the poem with innumerable errors, induced Tennyson to print it in a correct and final shape. This was merely a revival: the poet's heart of hearts was still absorbed in drama. 'Becket' was already in contemplation; and towards the end of the year another and much slighter piece was introduced to the public. On December 18, 1879, Messrs. Hare and Kendal produced 'The Falcon' at the St. James's Theatre.

'The Falcon' is by far the least ambitious of Tennyson's plays; it is, indeed, a mere *lever de rideau*. The argument is borrowed from Boccaccio, where it serves as the ninth novel of the fifth day of the 'Decameron,' the story told by Dioneo. The Count Federigo degli Alberighi, an impoverished nobleman, is in love with a wealthy and beautiful widow, the Lady Giovanna. He loved her before her first marriage, and has now spent all his resources in the purchase of a diamond necklace as a gift for her. But she has a rival,—his favourite falcon. The Count has a strange affection for this bird, to which he prattles by the hour of love and life. Sometimes he almost feels that the bird is as dear to him as his mistress. Now, the Lady Giovanna's son is sick to death, and in his moody melancholy he yearns for the

Count's falcon. It seems as if this toy alone could turn the course of his ill-health. So the Lady Giovanna calls upon the Count, at the luncheon hour, to beg the falcon of him. The scanty provision in the larder is insufficient for the meal; and the Count secretly orders his foster-brother, Filippo, to kill the falcon and have it cooked for Giovanna. While the meal is in preparation, the Count sings, and reminds Giovanna of the earlier years of their love. But, when the lunch is spread, the Lady cannot eat. She is filled with anxiety for her request; and when she proffers it, she learns that her lover has striven so hard to entertain her that he has killed his favourite for her sake. Then her love holds back no longer, and their happiness is secure.

There are but four characters in the piece—Elizabetta the Count's nurse, Filippo his foster-brother, an echo of the Shakespearian clown, and the Count and Lady themselves. The length of the piece (it could scarcely play for more than an hour) prevents any delicate sketch of character: nor is such analysis demanded in so slight an essay. But where there is little character there must be action and motive. Action, as a survey of the argument will show, there is practically none; and the motive is insufficient. As a story to while away an afternoon, the tale has a charm and a romantic interest: but these pale of necessity when the argument is set out in dramatic form. Then the story must depend on motive, and on motive alone. Now, the interest and attraction of an extinct form of field-sport is not a sufficient groundwork for drama. The Count's affection for his

favourite falcon, intelligible enough to the ladies of Florence, has not depth and strength enough to convince an English audience. The sacrifice would be affecting as an incident; it is not strong enough to form the main motive of a play. 'The Falcon' was respectfully and kindly received, but there was no enthusiasm. The piece was perfectly acted, with a delicate taste and a full appreciation of the beauty of the dialogue, and its success was chiefly due to its performance. The customary call of compliment for the author was answered by Mr. Hare, who informed the audience that Mr. Alfred Tennyson was not present, but that his son, Mr. Hallam Tennyson, would convey to his father their kindly appreciation of his play. But 'The Falcon's' wings were not broad enough nor strong enough to carry it into success.

The next year, however, saw the publication of a volume which was to succeed where 'The Falcon' failed. The book of 'Ballads,' issued in 1880, contains between cover and cover the most dramatic of all Tennyson's poems. The monologue, first suggested in 'St. Simeon Stylites,' is brought to perfection in 'The First Quarrel,' 'Rizpah,' 'Sir John Oldcastle,' 'Lord Cobham,' and 'Columbus.' The poems in dialect have no better examples than 'The Northern Cobbler' and 'The Village Wife.' 'The Revenge,' 'The Defence of Lucknow,' and the 'Voyage of Maeldune' are among the finest, most spirited poems of action in the language. 'The Sisters' and 'In the Children's Hospital' stand midway between the idyll and the dramatic monologue, catching some of

the most characteristic traits of either form. 'De Profundis,' which appeared first in *The Nineteenth Century* for May 1880, stands side by side with 'The Higher Pantheism,' as a calm, philosophical declaration of faith in the goodness of a God who does all things well. The other contents of the volume were the prefatory sonnet to *The Nineteenth Century*, the sonnets to W. H. Brookfield, Montenegro, and to Victor Hugo, the translations 'The Battle of Brunanburgh' and 'Achilles over the Trench,' the poem 'To the Princess Frederica of Hanover on her Marriage,' the lines for Sir John Franklin's cenotaph, and 'To Dante.' There was also a dedicatory prelude to his grandson :

'Golden-hair'd Ally, whose name is one with mine.'

The 'Ballads' are particularly interesting in their relation to the rest of Tennyson's work, and for their place in the very centre of the dramatic period. They represent, as it were, a moulding of the old material into more dramatic form,—the immediate result of the concentration of the poet's mind upon drama. He turns to the old subjects and the old scenes; but, almost unconsciously, he treats them in a new spirit. His touch becomes more vivid, and less personal; his characters speak with their own tongues, and not with the voice of the poet. 'The First Quarrel' is an idyll of the hearth inspired with life: Nelly and Harry are life-like in the very respect in which Annie and Philip, in 'Enoch Arden,' are idealised. They speak the rough, genuine language of the fisher-folk.

'"I had sooner be cursed than kiss'd,"'

she says. And again:

> 'You were keeping with her,
> When I was loving you all along, an' the same as before.'

Then hear Annie speak: Annie, with the same bringing-up, the same surroundings:

> 'If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not come—
> Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
> Surely I shall be wiser in a year:
> O wait a little!'

The one treatment is dramatic, the other idyllic.

'Rizpah' is even more dramatic. A mother, whose boy has been hung for robbing the mail, is dying: and on her deathbed she tells, with all the horror of circumstance, how she stole his bones and gave them Christian burial under the churchyard wall. And now she is going to her boy—she cares not whither.

> 'Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well.
> But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in Hell.
> And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire:
> Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the fire?
> I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—
> You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.'

'The Northern Cobbler,' the story of the salvation of a drunkard, and 'The Village Wife,' the garrulous gossip of an old countrywoman—both written in dialect,—'Sir John Oldcastle' and 'Columbus,' are all of the very essence of dramatic monologue. 'The Voyage of the Maeldune' is written in a combination of two styles. There is a wealth of description in the account of the different isles at which the wanderers touch, which suggests the colour of 'The

'Lotos Eaters' and 'The Voyage.' On the other hand, there is a rapid movement, as of the plunging of the vessel through the foam, which hurries the poem on from picture to picture.

'And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and vaunted our kith and our kin,
And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and chanted the triumph of Finn,
Till each like a golden image was pollen'd from head to feet,
And each was as dry as a cricket, with a thirst in the middle-day heat.
Blossom and blossom, and promise of blossom, but never a fruit!
And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we hated the isle that was mute,
And we tore up the flowers by the million and flung them in bight and bay,
And we left but a naked rock, and in anger we sail'd away.'

The same wild excitement, now holding its breath in hope and fear, overwhelms the spirit of 'The Defence of Lucknow.' The shadow of death hangs over the poem, as we listen to the beating of men's hearts failing them for fear.

'Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of the pickaxe be thro'!
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark pioneer is no more;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.'

This is the true spirit of drama, keen, eager, with a sense of action and a grasp of situation. There is nothing like this in Tennyson's plays,—not even in 'Harold.'

It is, perhaps, scarcely worth mentioning, but the fact remains that, some years after the appearance of 'Columbus,' a pamphlet was printed claiming to trace a connection between the Laureate's poem and a piece of verse by an obscure writer called 'Columbus at Seville.' The attempt, in itself ignoble, was con-

ducted in a spirit which frees it from the necessity of serious consideration; its only interest lies in its exposure of the fallacy and worthlessness of the average accusation of plagiarism. No cause is easier to argue: none is less deserving of argument.

In the year of the 'Ballads' (1880), in February, two child songs, 'The City Child' and 'Minnie and Winnie,' appeared in an American periodical, *St. Nicholas.* These have since been reprinted in Tennyson's collected works. They are melodious nursery-rhymes: a singular contrast to the work which was occupying Tennyson's inclination at the moment. For at that time he was finishing 'The Cup.'

Towards the end of the year Mr. Irving announced the production of Tennyson's new play at the Lyceum; and on Monday, January 3, 1881, it was presented to one of the most distinguished audiences which were ever gathered into a theatre for a first night. Report had been busy with the play beforehand, and the critical had prophesied failure. Neither 'Queen Mary' nor 'The Falcon' had succeeded; and Mr. Irving was considered to have shown some temerity in venturing on another of the Laureate's dramas. But his boldness was justified. 'The Cup' was a genuine success. The play was staged with liberal magnificence, and acted with sympathy and power. Everything that art and artifice could do to secure success was done, and the result belied the fears which even Tennyson's best friends had been unable to put aside altogether. The following was the original cast of

THE CUP

GALATIANS

Synorix, ...	. Mr. Irving.
Sinnatus, ...	. Mr. Terriss.
Attendant, ...	. Mr. Harwood.
Boy, ...	. Miss Brown.
Maid, ...	. Miss Pauncefort.
Camma, ...	. Miss Ellen Terry.

ROMANS

Antonius, ...	. Mr. Tyars.
Publius, ...	. Mr. Hudson.
Nobleman, ...	. Mr. Matthison.
Herald, ...	. Mr. Archer.

The story of the tragedy, which is borrowed from Plutarch's *De Claris Mulieribus*, and had already been used by Montanelli, may be told in a few words. Sinnatus, tetrarch of Galatia, is suspected of infidelity to the Roman rule. Antonius, a Roman general, is sent to investigate his honour, and is accompanied on the quest by Synorix, ex-tetrarch of the same province. Three years before, when he held the tetrarchy, Synorix had conceived a passion for a Galatian girl, Camma, who has since married Sinnatus. He is a crude voluptuary, who has never yet found a woman he could not 'force or wheedle to his will,' and he spies opportunity, in the present case, for winning from Camma all he wishes. As a first claim on her attention he sends her a golden cup, embossed with the figure of Artemis, and then, by a lucky chance, he falls in with Sinnatus and his companions hunting, and joins them. At the end of the day's sport, Sinnatus invites Synorix to his house; and the traitor plays on Camma's wifely fear by

swearing that Antonius knows her husband to be false to Rome, and will have him tortured, and, perhaps, killed in punishment. He suggests that Camma shall, on the following morning, repair to the camp, and beg Antonius for mercy for her husband; and, as their conversation ends, the mob, without learning who Synorix is, begin to clamour for his blood. Sinnatus, however, helps him to escape; and at the appointed hour next day Camma comes to the camp. Instead of Antonius she finds Synorix; and, drawing her dagger against him, is disarmed. Then Sinnatus rushes to the rescue, and Synorix stabs him with Camma's dagger. She flies to the temple of Artemis for safety.

In the second act she is found installed priestess of the temple, and Synorix, who has now been appointed Prince of Galatia, is still besieging her with entreaties for her hand. At last she accepts him, and crowns herself Queen of Galatia. The marriage rites are to be solemnised in the temple, and Antonius comes with Synorix to the festival. Then Camma asks Antonius what punishment he would have inflicted on Sinnatus had he been found untrue to Rome. The general hints at a reprimand; and Camma learns how treacherously Synorix has deceived her. Still she carries on the semblance of her marriage. Poisoning the libation in the cup Synorix had given her, she hands it him, and drinks of it herself; and she and her would-be betrayer die together.

'The Cup' is a powerful little tragedy, rich in action, condensed into a singularly brief space. The

story is actually concerned with but four characters, and of these, three only are intimately connected with the interest. Each of the three is endowed with vitality and strength. Camma is especially distinct and human. Her soul is bound up in her love for her husband. After the revelations of Synorix and his hint of the danger in which Sinnatus is involved, she sinks from the strain of the moment into a tender remembrance of the past. Standing at the window, she sees afar off the vine-bower where Sinnatus told her of his love.

> 'You kiss'd me there
> For the first time. Sinnatus, kiss me now.'

This is pure womanly. The sense of danger draws him nearer to her: she needs the assurance of his presence in the feeling of his arms about her and his lips to hers. And then she sets sentiment aside, and goes out to danger in the hope of saving him. Such love as this cannot die with his death. It nerves her to something stronger, when his help is taken from her. For the satisfaction of revenge she endures the indignation of her fellow-priestess, Phœbe, at the prospect of her marriage to Synorix. In the keenness of the moment she seems to throw modesty aside, as she throws away her fear. Phœbe reminds her of the shyness with which she faced her first marriage; and she replies—

> 'I have no fears at this my second marriage.
> See here—I stretch my hand out—hold it there.
> How steady it is!'

She endures it all, that she may pass to Sinnatus on

the other side of death, and tell him that he is avenged.

> 'Row to the blessed Isles! the blessed Isles!—
> Sinnatus! . . .
> There—league on league of ever-shining shore
> Beneath an ever-rising sun—I see him—
> Camma, Camma! Sinnatus, Sinnatus!'

The husband, for whom she ventures all things, appears, in the short while he is before us, as a brave, chivalrous soldier. He saves the life of Synorix, to whom Galatia owed nothing but revenge, and in return he pays for his clemency with his life. For the rest he is a keen hunter and a hot-blooded antagonist.

Synorix is a libertine: selfish, as is the wont of his kind: sacrificing every honourable scruple to the satisfaction of his lust. He is false even to Rome; he lies to Camma of Rome's intention in order to frighten her into compliance with his will. At the end, even, he is false to himself.

> '"Tell the Senate!"

he says,

> "I have been most true to Rome—would have been true
> To *her*—if—if——"'

Synorix, false at the moment of his death to the country which he served, could never have been true to a woman.

But the strength and vigour of 'The Cup' does not consist merely in the portraiture of this vivid trio of characters; the tragedy has especial merit in the swift, eager sequence of its incidents. It has sufficient motive to have excused its prolongation to twice its

present length; but its concise, nervous movement lends it a strength which an elaboration of detail would inevitably weaken. In singular contrast to 'Queen Mary,' it has not a scene or a passage of dialogue which could be omitted without harm to the whole; and the technical stage-craft is an advance upon the advance of 'Harold.' The scene between Camma, Synorix, and Sinnatus is a piece of breathless rapidity which is full of dramatic energy, and the act-drop falls upon a strong and impressive situation. The dialogue is more direct and incisive than in the earlier dramas; speech cuts into speech with that sharp stroke which carries the play along with it. And during the last act the gradual atmosphere of tragedy gathers round the characters with a sombre progress which is the evidence of true genius in the writer. The strange, uncomfortable words of suggestion which Camma throws out from time to time form themselves by degrees into a sense of coming horror. The thunder rolls above the marriage hymn, as though Artemis were answering Camma from the cloud. And at the altar of the goddess, whose sanctuary he wished to violate, Synorix pays the penalty of his lust. 'The Cup' is a tragedy in little; but it is a tragedy that may well stand as an example of the most vivid dramatic literature which any English author has produced during the last quarter of a century.

Mr. William Archer, who gives 'The Cup' a very full consideration in his interesting volume *English Dramatists of To-day*, has two main faults to find with it. He complains, in the first place, that the play

should not open till after the death of Sinnatus; and, in the second place, he insists that, as Synorix kills Sinnatus in self-defence, Camma's revenge is robbed of half its justification. An affection for Montanelli's play has, perhaps, led the critic a little further than his calmer judgment would follow. For to say that the play should begin with Camma's revenge is merely to argue that the story should be told from a different standpoint. Tennyson's object is to show the course of Synorix's unholy love, which is quite willing to satisfy itself without bloodshed. Were the story to begin after the death of Sinnatus, the dramatic exposition of this love would, perhaps, suffer in justification from the fact that Synorix killed her husband in defending his own life. But, as Tennyson's play stands, Camma's thirst for revenge is fully justified by the double wrong that Synorix has done her. He has sought to seduce her, and, to gain his end, had lied to her as to Rome's intention. Had that lie remained untold, she would never have gone to Antonius, and so led her husband to his death. It is difficult to imagine a stronger motive for revenge than that which animates the Camma of 'The Cup.' Not only has her husband fallen by the hand of Synorix, but the circumstances of his death have been rendered possible by an unholy love for herself. Without that love, there had been no lie; without the lie, Sinnatus would never have run into danger.

Another fault which Mr. Archer finds with 'The Cup' is more reasonable: he complains of the rapidity of the action. He argues that the true psychological motive, the growth of Camma's thirst for revenge, and

the religious enthusiasm which justifies it, are slurred over in the Laureate's version of the story. There is truth in this: 'The Cup,' as we said before, might be prolonged to twice its length without loss. But it was more than probable that, in Tennyson's hands, the psychological motive, once insisted upon, would have increased in importance until it overbalanced the action of the play. A second act, which should trace Camma's revenge in its growth, would have lent itself to that 'tendency without drama' which Mr. Archer has always been the first to condemn. The vivid, eager movement of the plot would have been stayed: the interest would inevitably have hung fire. Doubtless Tennyson foresaw this, and hurried the action forward to its tragic close. As it now stands, 'The Cup' is unimpeded by psychology: it is a drama, not a study. And in freeing himself from the temptation to be analytic, Tennyson has broken a custom which, both before and after 'The Cup,' led him to dramatic failure. To treat a subject in a different spirit is not necessarily to treat it better. 'What is writ is writ'; and it is written with a strength and energy which the popular dramatists of the day may well envy the Laureate.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROMISE OF MAY AND *BECKET*

At the moment when the Lyceum Theatre was attracting London to its sumptuous version of 'The Cup,' another of the Laureate's old friends left him. In 1881 James Spedding died. The Cambridge circle was gradually narrowing: Arthur Hallam, Charles Tennyson, and Frederick Denison Maurice were gone: FitzGerald survived Spedding for no more than three years. The breaking up of the old order filled those who were left with saddened memories. FitzGerald's letters during 1881 contain more than one reference to the loss of Spedding. He recalls gratefully the visit of Tennyson and himself to the Speddings in 1835, when the poet was busy upon 'Morte d'Arthur,' and the 'daffodils were out in a field before the house.' He adds with a yearning for sympathy: 'Does Alfred Tennyson remember them?'

As the circle narrows, those who are left draw closer to one another.

Meanwhile the dramatic movement still carried Tennyson with it. In November 1881 he printed in *The Nineteenth Century* another vivid monologue, 'Despair,' which in intensity and horror is scarcely to be rivalled. It was to be ridiculed, however. A

month later Mr. Swinburne published in *The Fortnightly Review* a clever, if somewhat savage, travesty, 'Disgust,' in which the circumstances and sentiment of Tennyson's story were burlesqued into a coarse chirurgical operation. But Mr. Swinburne's genuine admiration for Tennyson's work prevented his parodies from becoming gross: and, in the year preceding 'Disgust,' he had travestied him with genuine felicity. 'The Heptalogia: or the Seven against Sense,' imitations of the characteristic manner and matter of the seven leading poets of the day, was published in 1880 anonymously; but its authorship was immediately ascribed to Mr. Swinburne, who actually parodies himself in a poem that is a little too clearly a caricature. The style of Robert Browning is much more fortunately caught, and Mrs. Browning is skilfully echoed in 'The Poet and the Woodlouse.' The travesty of Tennyson is entitled 'The Higher Pantheism in a Nutshell': it is keen, but admirable.

> 'God, whom we see not, is; and God, who is not, we see;
> Fiddle, we know, is diddle; and diddle we take it, is dee.'

There is, perhaps, but one parody of Tennyson's manner which can stand on an equality with 'The Higher Pantheism in a Nutshell,' and this rival is seven years older. In 1873 General Hamley, to whom 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade' is dedicated, contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine* 'Sir Tray: an Arthurian Legend,' as excellent a piece of fooling as ever was penned. It tells, with strangely Tennysonian touch, the story of Mother Hubbard and her dog—a favourite groundwork for parody. Mother

Hubbard's return from the baker's is recounted with graphic solemnity. Tray lies dead:

'The carcase mov'd
All over wooden like a piece of wood.'

And again, could anything be more Tennysonian than the following version of the lines

'She went to the hatter's to get her a hat,
And when she came back he was feeding the cat'?

This is how General Hamley describes the scene:

'Then up she rose, and to the Hatter's went,—
"Hat me," quoth she, "your very newest hat."
And so they hatted her, and she return'd,
Home thro' the darksome wold, and rais'd the latch,
And marked, full lighted by the ingle-glow,
Sir Tray, with spoon in hand, and cat on knee,
Spattering the mess about the chaps of Puss.'

Such travesty has root in a very real appreciation of the characteristics of the original.

But to return to 'Despair.' Tennyson's dramatic poems have often proved a stumbling-block to the less astute of his readers, and there were many people who found 'Despair' unquieting. The treatment of atheism was considered dangerous, if not positively immoral. An eminent socialist discussed the poem in a controversial tract, and a Mr. Thomas Walker delivered a lecture on its religious significance. In a few pregnant words he represented the attitude of the public to the poem.

'Culture,' he said, 'could no more accept than disown it, and sulked. Society was vexed that its conventional decorum had been set at nought, and muttered "indiscretion" and "scandal." The religious world groaned as if under a benumbing torpedo shock.

And had the far-seeing poet braved so much hostility, and provoked all this dislike for nothing? For an enterprise so perilous was there not a reason and a compensation?'

It was the old story: the public treated a dramatic utterance as an expression of the poet's own sentiment; it began to fear that the Tennyson of 'In Memoriam' had gone down before the flowing tide of disbelief. The fear seems incredible, but it is none the less a matter of history.

'Despair' has a special interest as the forerunner of 'The Promise of May.' The problem of the struggle of doubt and faith had at intervals suggested itself to Tennyson: it found voice in 'In Memoriam,' in 'The Higher Pantheism,' in 'Two Voices.' It was now, in Tennyson's most dramatic period, to issue in a dramatic exposition—to be represented, not subjectively, but objectively. And the representation in the new form was to draw the lesson of the old, the doctrine of the necessity and immortality of Faith, without which the man is dead to all the virtues and aspirations of life. Only the least intellectual student could find a note of doubt in Tennyson.

But there are always those who misunderstand: and another anecdote of this period is worth retelling in the present connection. It is a fitting companion to the debate over 'Despair,' and the story of the Eyre rebellion. In March 1882, at a concert at St. James's Hall, Mr. Santley sang 'Hands all round,' to a setting by Mrs. Tennyson. It will be remembered that the song has a hearty refrain:

'To this great cause of Freedom, drink, my friends.'

and, naturally, in the musical version, the word 'Drink' was repeated to a stirring melody. The Committee of Good Templars were up in arms at once, and the poet received a letter of expostulation for his encouragement of drunkenness! Of a certain class and their conscientiousness there is no end.

It was not so that the costermonger in Covent Garden regarded the poet! The story is no new one, but it has its interest here. 'You are Mr. Tennyson,' said the man. 'Look here, sir, I 've been drunk six days out of seven; but, if you 'll shake hands with me, I 'm damned if I 'll ever be drunk again.'

During the early months of 1882 Tennyson was occupied upon another drama, which, after some delay, was produced on November 11, 1882. Mrs. Bernard Beere, the one tragic actress of the moment, had taken the Globe Theatre for a spell of management, and she was attracted by the Laureate's new play. The financial success of 'The Cup' stood also as a precedent of good fortune, and with the following cast she re-opened the theatre with

THE PROMISE OF MAY

Farmer Dobson, ...	MR. CHARLES KELLY.
Philip Edgar, ...	MR. HERMANN VEZIN.
Farmer Steer, ...	MR. H. CAMERON.
Mr. Wilson, ...	MR. E. T. MARCH.
James, ...	MR. H. HALLEY.
Dan Smith, ...	MR. C. MEDWIN.
Higgins, ...	MR. A. PHILIPS.
Jackson, ...	MR. G. STEVENS.
Allen, ...	MR. H. E. RUSSELL.
Dora Steer, ...	MRS. BERNARD BEERE.
Eva Steer, ...	MISS EMMELINE ORMSBY.
Sally, ...	MISS ALEXES LEIGHTON.
Milly, ...	MISS MAGGIE HUNT.

The rumour of the drama had preceded it, and a distinguished and expectant audience filled the theatre on the first night. It was known that the play was to touch on agnosticism, but, though some of the spectators may have come ready to disapprove any atheistic sentiment, there was no suggestion of any united attempt to condemn the drama unheard. On the contrary, its opening passages were delivered into an atmosphere of respectful and eager attention. The new manager had done all she could to secure success. The pastoral scenery was artistically painted; the company was a strong one. The programme is a delicate little souvenir. On a buff-card, folded, the song, 'O joy for the Promise of May!' is printed on either side of the cast of characters. The front cover bears a pink may-tree in full bloom with golden leaves; another may-tree adorns the back. Care and thought had been bestowed upon every detail of the production. But before the end of the first act the fate of the play was decided. The first murmurs of disapproval grew into loud and continued derision, and the principal actor could with difficulty carry his part to an end. When the curtain fell, 'The Promise of May' was irretrievably ruined.

The failure of the play has been traced to two main motives of irritation, which are supposed to have wrought the audience to the pitch at which endurance becomes impossible. On the one hand, it has been pointed out that the hero is a sensual agnostic, whose very portrayal on the stage was provocation enough for an outburst of protest. And, on the other hand, it is agreed that the one motive, and

the one situation, the outcome of that motive, which are the vertebræ of the play, are so unpalatable in tone and sentiment as to alienate the interest and sympathy of the best-disposed audience. The shortest consideration of the drama will help to an estimate of this criticism.

'The Promise of May' opens before Farmer Steer's house, on his eightieth birthday. His labourers and farm-servants are keeping holiday; and, as if to crown the festival, his daughter Dora, who has been from home nursing a relation, returns to join in their pleasure. Eva, Steer's other daughter, has, we learn, a lover, Philip Edgar, a wealthy gentleman, who has seduced her under a promise of marriage. And in the course of the act he persuades her to elope with him. He is an amateur philosopher, full of catch-words and Hedonistic axioms. Content to seek his own pleasure, he has said in his heart that there is no God; and, the religious sanction being removed, it follows that there is little enough obligation to be moral. He is a strange lover for the simple farmer's daughter.

The first act takes us no further than this in the story, and then five years elapse. With the second act we find Farmer Dobson, a stolid country bumpkin, who, in the opening of the play, was in love with Dora, still seeking for her promise unsuccessfully. Their conversation reveals the fact that five years ago Eva had run away, leaving a letter to hint that she would drown herself. At the news of her disgrace the old father had worked himself into a fury which subsided into paralysis, from which he emerged

blind. To this result of his selfish sin Edgar returns, under the name of Harold. Time and travel have bronzed him, and he wears a beard: so changed, he passes unrecognised. Dobson alone suspects him, but Edgar shows the simple farmer a newspaper notice of his father's death, which, from an identity in names, he easily passes off as his own. Edgar at once makes love to Dora, who is readily won, when news reaches them of an accident in a neighbouring lane, where a lady has been run over. With this the second act closes.

In Act III. we find Eva, the unknown lady who was hurt in the accident, nursed by Dora, who is keeping her sister's identity a secret from their father. Eva, however, in the yearning for his forgiveness, consents at last to tell him; but the old man is too much troubled by his disease to understand her. Then Edgar and Eva meet; and Dora learns who her lover really is. Eva, at the horror of the meet ing, drops dead; and, over her sister's dead body, Dora curses the man who hoped to 'make amends' by a marriage that seems, to her sentiment, little less than incestuous. And so the curtain falls on the two face to face, understanding each other at last.

The character of Philip Edgar is, on the face of it, repulsive; but the stage has long been accustomed to the portayal of repulsive characters. A drama that should occupy itself with soberness and chastity alone could never attain to strength and vitality. There is, without doubt, something peculiarly repellent in Edgar's idea that a marriage with Dora could make amends for Eva's seduction; but the notion is never

submitted to us as other than repellent. It is a course of thought sufficiently natural to a mind whose sentiment is sensation, whose love is lust. It is absurd to quarrel with a dramatist for drawing an unpleasant picture. The question of the critic is not—Is the picture pretty?—but—Is it real? is it in accordance with nature, without transgressing the limit of art? Now, it can hardly be held that the character of Edgar is too unlovely for art. Its restless inconsistency, its brutal estimate of womanhood, its low level of life, are all parts of that strange unsettled state of mind, born of an unconsidered study of philosophy.

> 'A surface man of theories, true to none,'

Philip Edgar has no real philosophy. If he is nearer to one school than another, it is to the doctrine of the Egoistic Hedonist.

> '"And if my pleasure breed another's pain,"

he says,

> "Well,—is not that the course of Nature, too?"'

And again:

> 'One time's vice may be
> The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
> Are but two masks of self.'

He has no trust for woman; to his creed trust is impossible. He can think of Eva so lowly, as to believe her infamous.

> 'She who gave herself to me so easily
> Will give herself as easily to another.'

The character was repellent, and the situation which the character made for itself was repellent; but this

repulsiveness was not a reason for the condemnation of the play. The gallery has hissed at blacker villains without hooting at the author. And yet some part of the failure of 'The Promise of May' was to be ascribed to the character of Edgar. And the reason was as follows. It had been rumoured, before the play began, that it would deal with agnosticism. Many of the audience had come under the impression that the principal character was to be a typical agnostic. There must have been many men and women in the house who themselves embraced agnosticism; and, when they found an inconsistent, bestial Hedonist represented as their type, they rose to condemn the play which belied their creed. On the fourth night one of their number rose, not only in spirit, but in person. An eye-witness of the scene which astonished the audience at the Globe Theatre on November 14th, 1882, has given the present writer a description of the circumstance. Early in the first act, while Mr. Hermann Vezin was speaking, a gentleman leapt excitedly to his feet from one of the stalls, and cried, 'I beg to protest: I beg——' A murmur for silence interrupted him, and he sat down, saying, 'I beg your pardon: I will wait till the end of the act.' As soon as the curtain had fallen, he again sprang up, exclaiming, 'I am an agnostic, and I protest against Mr. Tennyson's gross caricature of our creed.' There was an excited movement of the spectators to the *foyer*, and every one was asking from whom the protest had come. The general impression decided that the speaker was a distinguished socialistic orator and *littérateur*. But it was

known by the next day that the interruption had been made by the Marquis of Queensberry.

The protest was based on an error. Tennyson had no intention of representing in Philip Edgar an average agnostic. Edgar is a man of no definite creed, a philosopher of no fixed school. He is a restless, unsatisfied sensualist, whose mind has been filled with half-formed theories, gathered from a desultory and unsystematic study of various philosophies. There is no school to which he could give offence; save, perhaps, to that sect of prudery to which the representation of any life which pierces beyond the limit of the village-green is impure and impious. The whole of the discontent was due to a mistaken view of the poet's purpose.

It remains to consider what was the actual germ of failure in 'The Promise of May'; and beyond doubt it is to be traced to the ineffective, inartistic construction of the drama. To compare the *technique* of 'The Promise of May' with that of 'Harold' or 'The Cup' is to find in the new play a strange and unexpected decline in skill. The first act is hampered by soliloquy (a device which is far too frequently employed throughout the play), and is prolonged, after the final situation, by an unnecessary dialogue and dance. The second act is less fortunate still. Edgar is introduced to his old surroundings under circumstances which would inevitably have prompted him to keep away. The thin disguise of a beard helps every one to forget him, and Dobson, whose suspicions are aroused, is convinced by the thinnest artifice. From this point the characters vie with

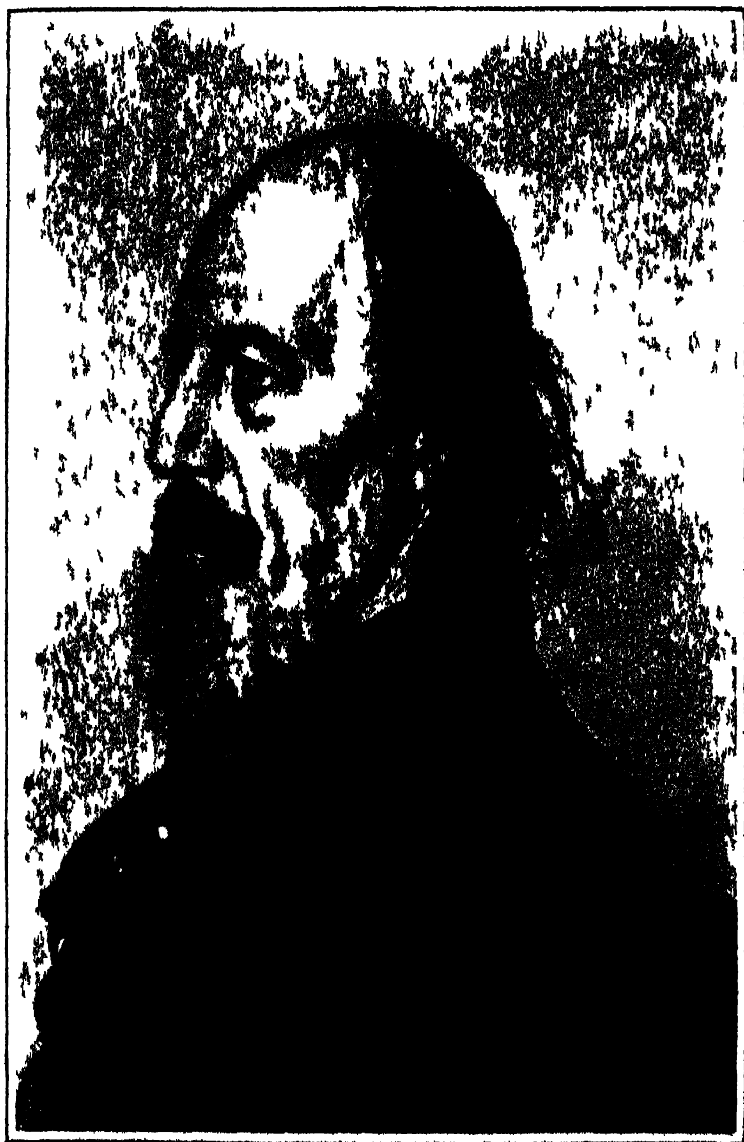
one another in their eagerness to be hoodwinked. Twice in the last act Edgar all but betrays himself; but Dora, who would surely feel some interest in her lover's past life, fails to follow up her questions. Edgar himself is even more complaisant. He knows that there is an invalid in the house, and that she is being kept in the background; but he never troubles himself to ask who she is. Dora, who has all along closed her eyes to what is bad in him, leaps in the moment to the other extreme—without pity or pardon. Over the body of the dead, in the very moment of death, the dramatist introduces a coarse struggle between the rival lovers, which has neither motive nor justification. The play is, in effect, invertebrate. The leading idea is not new: the treatment is unskilful. 'The Promise of May' is the only work of Tennyson, perhaps, which his admirers would be glad to forget. It will always remain the weapon with which his depreciators will work their worst. But in spite of 'The Promise of May,' the spirit of the dramatist is alive in the author of 'Maud' and 'Harold.'

By the kindness of his friend, Mr. Hall Caine, the writer is enabled to print in this context a facsimile letter from Tennyson, referring to the virulent criticism vented by the Daily Press upon 'The Promise of May.' Its critical interest needs no further comment. The violence of the attack upon the play was, as is usual in such cases, disfigured by a variety of bad taste; and the result was a period of silence with the Laureate. In March 1883, 'Frater, Ave atque Vale' appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*; but no considerable

work of Tennyson's was published during that year. The press was to have a further opportunity to attack him in another field.

During the autumn of 1883 Mr. Gladstone and Tennyson started for a yachting tour in North-West Europe. On their outward way, they were presented with the freedom of the burgh of Kirkwall; and Mr. Gladstone took the opportunity of the presentation to make a speech full of generous admiration of the Laureate and his work. He said: 'We public men—who play a part which places us much in view of our countrymen—we are subject to the danger of being momentarily intoxicated by the kindness, the undue homage of kindness, we may receive. It is our business to speak, but the words which we speak have wings, and fly away and disappear. The work of Mr. Tennyson is of a higher order. I anticipate for him the immortality for which England and Scotland have supplied, in the course of their long national life, many claims. Your record to-day of the additions which have been made to your municipal body may happen to be examined in distant times, and some may ask with regard to the Prime Minister, "Who was he, and what did he do? We know nothing about him." But the Poet Laureate has written his own song on the hearts of his countrymen that can never die.'

Arrived at Copenhagen, they were entertained by the King of Denmark, meeting the Czar and Czarina, the King of Greece, and the Princess of Wales. On the following day the Royal party lunched on the visitors' yacht, and in the afternoon



Alp ..

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Tennyson read his guests extracts from his poetry. It was generally understood that it was during this tour that Mr. Gladstone suggested to Tennyson an offer which, a month or two later, the Laureate accepted. Be that as it may, Tennyson had not long returned to England when it was reported that he was about to be created a Peer. In December the rumour was authenticated, and on the 18th of January 1884 he was gazetted Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford. It was a ripe opportunity for the comment of cheap journalism, and these opportunities are not neglected. It is only as they pass and are forgotten that their eager and importunate insistence shows its feeble and ephemeral nature to full disadvantage.

Lord Tennyson's attendances in the House were very few; his vote was only registered on two occasions. He voted in support of the bill for extending the County Franchise, and paired in favour of the bill which advocated the legalisation of marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

This year made a further gap in the circle of Tennyson's friends; in June 1883 Edward FitzGerald died. Just before his friend's death, as a later volume of poems tells us, Mr. Hallam Tennyson found, among some old manuscript in his father's handwriting, the dramatic monologue 'Tiresias,' which the Laureate hastened to send to FitzGerald, with a hearty prelude which laughed at his friend's vegetarian diet, and recalled with tenderness those

'gracious times
When, in our younger London days,
You found some merit in my rhymes,
And I more pleasure in your praise.'

But FitzGerald's friendly criticism was not to touch 'Tiresias.'

> 'And while I fancied that my friend
> For this brief idyll would require
> A less diffuse and opulent end,
> And would defend his judgment well,
> If I should deem it overnice—
> The tolling of his funeral bell
> Broke on my Pagan Paradise.'

'So many dead, and him the last.' FitzGerald's death was to render the life of the Master of Trinity the last tie that bound Tennyson to the old Cambridge memories. For FitzGerald had been one of the first to prophesy great and goodly things for his friend, with an enthusiasm that was disappointed by the event. But, though his criticism lost sympathy, his friendship for Tennyson never faltered; when he failed to understand the poet, he never missed his hold upon the man.

The year that followed was uneventful, save for the publication of 'The Cup' and 'The Falcon,' and the one entirely new work, 'Becket,' which appeared in November. But in March 1884 an interesting occasion elicited a poem from Tennyson. A Shakespearian exhibition was organised at the Albert Hall, in support of the Chelsea Hospital for Women. In connection with this a small pamphlet was published, including poems by Robert Browning and Tennyson. The latter's contribution was written fifty years before, and found its way into the daily papers before the little book was issued. It ran as follows:—

> 'Not he that breaks the dams, but he
> That thro' the channels of the State
> Convoys the people's wish, is great;
> His name is pure, his fame is free.'

In the same year he accepted the Presidency of the Incorporated Society of Authors.

Tennyson also contributed, during the year, a set of introductory verses to 'Rosa Rosarum,' a little book upon roses, by E. V. B. (The Hon. Mrs. Boyle), in which the poet pictured Love flying across the night to wake the rose into bloom.

In the same year, in *Macmillan's Magazine* for December, he printed the stirring lines, 'Freedom.' This poem is a kind of forecast of the second 'Locksley Hall,' a protest against 'the lawless crowd,' whose wild cry for progress is so violently opposed to the poet's calm faith in the gradual development of man, and his distrust of

'Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.'

But these were lesser efforts of his genius. In November 1884 he published one of his most considerable works, which bore, for the first time, the imprint of Messrs. Macmillan, to whom the Laureate's copyright was now transferred, and who henceforward remained his publishers until his death. The life of 'Becket' had been under treatment for a long while; and it is probable that, when the play was begun, it was intended for the stage. Experiences which intervened, however, turned the course of the poet's intention, and when 'Becket' was finally printed it contained a disclaimer of any hope that it would, 'in its present form, meet the exigencies of our modern theatre.' It is, therefore, necessary to treat 'Becket' from a standpoint different from that at which the other dramas have been surveyed.

It must be approached, not as a stage-play, but as a dramatic poem: as a study of character and life rather than as an effort of movement and action. But, in fact, it has a fine dramatic motive—the struggle between the interests of Church and State, influenced by the struggle between a legitimate and an unlawful love. Even as the play stands, were it not to set one's self against the author's expressed desire, it would be interesting to point out a number of situations eminently adapted to the necessities of stage-production. In a condensed form 'Becket' would make a strong play: in its present shape it is a noble study of a prolonged and bitter struggle. Henry, weak and short-sighted, owes everything to his Chancellor. Becket helps him to his love, protects Rosamund, spends the vast sums decreed to him to procure the glory and reputation of his King. But upon his appointment to the Archbishopric the struggle between Church and State begins. He lays aside the seal of his office as Lord Chancellor, and offends the King by his resignation. He refuses to study Henry's wishes, when they seem to him to run counter to the welfare of the Church. 'This mitred Hercules' is adamant in his devotion to his spiritual office. He estranges the King by these differences: he excites the enmity of his fellow-bishops by his scruples: he attracts to himself the aversion of Fitzurse and Tracy by his protection of Rosamund. And for the same reason he makes a foe of the Queen. The two women, who move in the background, influencing the lives of Henry and Becket, are vividly contrasted. Eleanor is passionate and jealous, Rosamund is tender and

yearning—a caged bird, ill at ease in the prison of her bower. It is Becket who saves her from the dagger and cup of the Queen; and from that moment his keenest foe is a woman. And when she tells the King that Rosamund has, at Becket's instigation, passed from his love unto Godstow Nunnery, the prelate has his world against him. From that moment he has but the one weak woman he has helped for friend, and she is left to pray over his dead body in the cathedral. Where history has been set aside, the dramatic situation has been strengthened. The end of the play is full of action and excitement.

'Becket' has one point in common with 'Queen Mary': it is the story of a prolonged tension. But whereas in 'Queen Mary' the tension never relaxes into movement, in 'Becket' it is the tension of a struggle, as of a rope stretched between two contending parties, quivering with the energy of either, giving now on this side, now on that. In this, 'Becket' is dramatic; there is a sense of struggle, and a sound of the panting breath of fight. There are passages in the play of consummate eloquence. Such are the speech of Becket, in which he describes his dream, when God sealed him as elect; the words of Henry in condemnation of Becket in the third scene of the first act; and the scene between Henry and Rosamund at the opening of Act II. The play contains also two of the most melodious of all Tennyson's songs—'The Reign of the Roses,' and the song at Rosamund's bower—

'Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?'

'The Cup' has the merits of condensation and con-

tinuous movement to commend it, but it lacks, it may be, completion. It is strange and unfortunate that, of the two great dramas of Tennyson, one has never been acted, while the other has been rendered by a certain over-elaboration partially unfitted to the stage. It may yet be that the one, with a few alterations, may be worthily produced; and the other, with a more liberal reconstruction, may be found deserving of a great actor's consideration. There is, at the moment at which these words go to press, a hope of the latter possibility ripening into fact. And it is to be trusted that both may yet be realised. For both 'Harold' and 'Becket' have a strong dramatic motive, and scenes of unusual strength. Even as they are, they are rich additions to a dramatic literature which is unrivalled by that of any other country.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM *TIRESIAS* TO *DEMETER*

A PLEASANT sympathy and appreciation, which frequently issued in graceful word and act, seem to have drawn the poets of America to Tennyson. Edgar Allan Poe, Emerson, and Longfellow had all their tribute of admiration to offer, and in 1885 Whittier joined the chorus of esteem. On January 26th Gordon had fallen at Khartoum, and some two months later the Quaker poet wrote to the Laureate, asking him for a set of verses designed for the hero's cenotaph. In answer, Tennyson sent the well-known quartette, 'Warrior of God, man's friend,' which has received a later correction to fit it for a motto for the Boys' National Memorial Home at Woking. The lines have less concentrated strength than the epitaph on Sir John Franklin, where inspiration may have been aided by a tie of relationship, but they are inferior to no other of the poet's memorial verses. The terse and direct utterance expresses much thought in a little room.

Three years later Tennyson received yet another tribute from America, in the homage of Walt Whitman, to whom he replied with the geniality which he had always ready for a kindred spirit. 'Dear Walt

Whitman,' he wrote, 'I thank you for your kind thought of me. I value the photograph much, and I wish that I could see not only this sun-picture, excellent as I am told it is, but also the living original. May he still live and flourish for many years to be.'

Mr. J. T. Fields, too, paid a visit to the poet, and walked with him on the downs in the moonlight. Suddenly he saw Tennyson drop on his knees in the grass. 'Violets, man, violets!' he cried: 'smell them, and you'll sleep the better.' His keen sense of smell had detected the flowers as he walked. It was to Mr. Fields that Tennyson gave the naive invitation, 'Come and let me read you "Maud." You'll never forget it.' The open, direct speech of the poet was always an exact indication of his thought.

In the November of 1885 Tennyson published another volume of poems—'Tiresias,'—and the tribute which Robert Browning had paid to his friend was returned in a hearty dedication—

TO MY GOOD FRIEND

ROBERT BROWNING

WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY

WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST

AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST

THIS VOLUME

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

It is characteristic of a certain shyness in Tennyson that he never told Browning of the dedication, and it was not till the book was in the hands of the public that the latter learned the circumstance from a friend.

The collection was, as it were, an aftermath of the poetic harvest,—a re-gathering of many diverse elements into a single sheaf. 'Tiresias,' with its dedication and epilogue to FitzGerald, was accompanied by 'The Wreck,' 'Despair,' 'The Ancient Sage,' 'The Flight,' 'To-morrow,' and 'The Spinster's Sweet-'Arts.' A new idyll, 'Balin and Balan,' followed. The patriotic poems were enriched by the addition of 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade'; and the volume also contained 'To Virgil,' originally printed in the *Nineteenth Century* in November 1882, 'The Dead Prophet,' 'Early Spring,' the 'Prefatory Poem to my Brother's Sonnets,' 'Frater, Ave atque Vale,' another contribution to the *Nineteenth Century* (March 1883), 'Helen's Tower,' the Epitaphs on Lord Stratford de Redclyffe, General Gordon, and Caxton, 'To the Duke of Argyll,' 'Hands all Round,' 'Freedom,' 'To H.R.H. Princess Beatrice,' and the lines, 'Old poets foster'd under kindlier skies,' which were subsequently re-named 'Poets and their Bibliographies.' It was an extremely interesting collection from the variety and wealth of its contents; but, while almost every one of the poems illustrated a different phase in the poet's development, none of them was perhaps representative of the very best work of the period which it suggested. 'Tiresias,' written many years before its publication, shares the characteristics of 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus,' missing the strong dramatic vigour of the one and the jewelled imagery of the other poem. 'The Wreck' and 'The Flight' belong to the directly dramatic period, and the first of the two has an intense and rugged pathos of

its own. 'The Flight,' on the other hand, assumes a simplicity which, at moments, scarcely escapes the commonplace. 'Despair' is an unrivalled example of Tennyson's most dramatic mood. 'To-morrow' and 'The Spinster's Sweet-'Arts' are notable additions to the collection of poems in dialect, falling but little, if at all, below the level of 'The Northern Farmer.' 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade,' on the other hand, is far less stirring and irresistible than the earlier story of Balaclava. 'The Ancient Sage' is another declaration of Tennyson's faith, and of his strong, unfaltering doubt of doubt. It is vain, he holds again, to question; the eye of faith must look beyond the shadows and mists of the moment.

'Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision! So, farewell.'

'Early Spring,' which appeared in 1884 in an American periodical, *The Youth's Companion*, is a return to the Nature of the earlier lyrics, full of the tints and rustling voices of the coming summer.

'Opens a door in Heaven;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

. . . .

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.'

FitzGerald, we feel, would have waked into eulogy at this strain,—a melody that swings back like an echo from Herrick.

In 'The Dead Prophet' the poet protests, once again, and this time in an allegory, against the post-mortem analysis of the great. The Beldam, who comes to the dead body of the prophet, to tear his heart out for men to see, is called 'Reverence' among men; but in heaven she is recognised as a curse. There is an unsparing realism in the grim picture of her sacrilege:

'She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
And all the people were pleased;
"See, what a little heart," she said,
"And the liver is half-diseased!"

She tore the Prophet after death,
And the people paid her well.
Lightnings flicker'd along the heath;
One shriek'd "The fires of Hell!"'

The same note is struck, in a calmer cadence, in 'Poets and their Bibliographies.' It is an echo of that early intolerance of criticism which took hold upon the poet, even in his Cambridge days. Tennyson's attitude in these poems is somewhat unworthy of his strength; it is petulant, and a little unreasonable. A certain crude, unmannerly curiosity of journalism is, perhaps, fairly rebuked; but it is altogether outside the limit of the poet's dignity to chafe against the quiet, reverent record of bibliography. 'What is writ, is writ'; it remains as the work of the life that wrote it; a desire to tabulate and analyse such work cannot be justly compared to the inarticulate gabbling of the crone over the heart of the dead

prophet. To protest too much is to lose the true touch of art; and in 'The Dead Prophet' Tennyson can scarcely escape the suggestion of an over-eagerness for protestation.

The new idyll, the longest poem in the volume, seems, if read alone, to lack the interest and incident of the other Arthurian poems, and to fail for want of motive. The savage brothers, tamed to fidelity, suggest in the opening the roughness of Geraint, at the close the despairing energy of Pelleas. The pathos of their brotherhood and death is not very tenderly traced, nor does their story appeal very closely to the reader's sympathy. But if the poem be placed in the position which it now fills, and read in order between 'Enid' and 'Vivien,' it is at once felt to bridge over a gulf, and to bring the Epic into a closer unity. It connects the periods of the rise and fall of the Round Table, carries the story of Guinevere's faithlessness a further step toward discovery, and introduces, with a touch of picturesque sensuousness, the coming of Vivien. Her song sounds as a first voice of impurity, drawing nearer through the alleys of the wood:

> 'The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,
> And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,
> But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood!
> The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!'

This intermediate position of 'Balin and Balan' accentuates the suggestion already made that the Idylls must be studied as a whole, not reviewed each as a separate, disconnected poem. Without the rest, 'Balin and Balan' has but a slight significance; with

them, it lends completeness and progress to the Arthurian legend.

But the strongest poem in the 'Tiresias' volume, as we have already hinted, was the much-disputed 'Despair.' It combines with singular intensity the analytic and dramatic faculties of the Tennysonian mind. A man and his wife, communing together in a perfect sympathy, come to speak of God, and, estimating Him by the popular standard of a God of Vengeance, lose faith in Him altogether. Their despair seeks consolation in suicide; the woman is drowned, 'the man rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.' With merciless sincerity he tells the story of his doubt. It is no blasphemy against the God of Mercy: it is merely a protest against that false God of Vengeance whom the theology of the earlier years of the nineteenth century represented as the only Saviour of mankind. It is a cry against a narrow creed that renders religion a worship of injustice, that twists the denunciations of the prophets into a denial of the Gospel of the Son of God.

> 'Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest woe,
> Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for aught that I know;
> But the God of Love and of Hell together—they cannot be thought,
> If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him and bring him to nought!'

The vigour has passed for blasphemy; but to judge it so is to misunderstand. It is the voice of protest against a view of God conceived by priest-craft: a view which shuts out all vision of a Creator whose name is Love. The protest came late, perhaps: we have learnt to understand our faith to richer and more divine purpose. But fifty years ago

it was otherwise. Fifty years ago the horrors of Hell blinded the eye to the splendours of Heaven; and the eternal doctrine of eternal punishment led many minds into atheism. There was room for the voice of reason, which was also the voice of the new dispensation. And no more reverent, no more faithful voice could have been found than that of Alfred Tennyson. For his faith had triumphed through a recognition of the infallible mercy that works through ways that at times pass man's understanding.

In the next year (1886) Tennyson had to face another loss,—this time from among the number of his own family. His younger son, Lionel, who had been attacked by fever in India, died on April the twentieth, on shipboard, during his journey home. The earlier days of his illness had been lightened by the kindness of Lord Dufferin, in whose company he was travelling. Lionel Tennyson had entered the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, and attracted the notice of Lord Dufferin, for whom he conceived a very tender regard; and it was at his invitation that Lionel Tennyson undertook the fatal journey to India which resulted in the fever, throughout the course of which his host did for him all that kindness and solicitude could.

'"Unspeakable,"

he wrote,

"Their kindness."'

But no care or affection could save the waning life. His coffin was buried in the Red Sea—

'Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars,'

and the cenotaph at Freshwater bears the following inscription:

IN MEMORIAM

LIONEL TENNYSON

FILII, MARITI, PATRIS CARISSIMI,
FORMA, MENTE, MORUM SIMPLICITATE
LAUDEM INTER AEQUALES MATURE ADEPTI
FAMAM QUOQUE IN REPUBLICA, SI VITA SUFFECISSET,
SINE DUBIO ADEPTURI
OBDORMIVIT IN CHRISTO
DIE APR. XX. ANNO CHRISTI MDCCCLXXXVI. AETAT. XXXII.
ET IN MARI APUD PERIN INDORUM
SEPULTUS EST.

The loss affected the Tennysons so keenly that Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who shortly afterwards visited England, was afraid that any attempt of his to see the Laureate would be unwelcome. But Lionel Tennyson's father-in-law, Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, assured him to the contrary: and Mr. Holmes and his daughter were persuaded to visit Farringford. They met with a most genial reception. Lady Tennyson, though an invalid at the time, exerted herself to entertain her guests; and Mrs. Hallam Tennyson drove Miss Holmes in her pony-cart to see Alum Bay and the Needles. Dr. Holmes was much attracted by the scenery of Farringford, and especially by the richness of the foliage. Tennyson himself took great pleasure in pointing out 'the finest and rarest trees' to his American visitor; and he had found a sympathetic spirit. 'I felt,' wrote Dr. Holmes, 'as if weary eyes and overtasked brains might (here) reach their happiest haven of rest.' He did not hear Tennyson read, however: an omission

which he afterwards regretted. 'I had rather listen to a poet reading his own verses than hear the best elocutionist that ever spouted recite them. He may not have a good voice or enunciation, but he puts his heart and his interpretative intelligence into every line, word, and syllable. I should have liked to hear Tennyson read such a line as

"Laborious orient ivory, sphere in sphere."'

But the visit was a short one, and the pleasure was denied.

In the August of 1886 Tennyson paid yet another visit to Cambridge, accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Hallam Tennyson. The Laureate had been staying with Mr. Locker-Lampson at Cromer, and, on his way to Cambridge, spent his birthday at Ely. From the seventh to the ninth of August he was at Cambridge. Tennyson himself was put up in Trinity; the others of the party stayed at the Bull. On the Saturday and Sunday they dined in College, the first evening with Mr. Jenkinson, the second with Mr. W. Aldis Wright; and the famous 1834 port was brought out in Tennyson's honour. On the Sunday morning he walked with Mr. Aldis Wright to Coton Church.

These were months of comparative inaction, but with the December of 1886 another volume of Tennyson's work was issued by Messrs. Macmillan,—a book of 201 pages, 150 of which were devoted to 'The Promise of May,' which, after a four years' oblivion, was now first presented to the reading public. 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,' as the

book was named, was dedicated to Lady Tennyson, and contained, besides the drama and the poem from which the volume took its title, two slighter pieces, 'The Fleet' and the ode on the 'Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition by the Queen.' The first of these, suggested by a speech made by Sir Graham Berry at the Colonial Institute on the ninth of November 1886, has already been alluded to in brief. It is an unusually rough passage of denunciation, strongly, if uncouthly, patriotic. The Ode for the Indian Exhibition was suited to its subject, but not, perhaps, of permanent value. The most memorable poem in the new volume was the eponymous essay in trochaics, which may, indeed, be justly considered the most important product of the poet's later years. A new experiment, made in the winter of life, is an unusual phenomenon, and 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After' possesses the elements of an almost unique interest. A return to the old scenes and old memories of boyhood,—made, not in dramatic fancy alone but in actual fact,—years after the earlier event, is practically unprecedented in poetry. It requires an irresistible dramatic talent to recall and rebuke, after such a lapse of time, the emotions and sensibilities which were, even in the first case, dramatically assumed by the poet. The two 'Locksley Halls,' indeed, regarded side by side, afford one of the most indisputable evidences of Tennyson's dramatic energy. In the first poem the speaker is an impetuous boy-lover, losing himself in the passion of a love which has been disdained. His indignation at his Amy's faithlessness wastes its strength in

unmanly depreciation of his rival, and in boyish threats of a flight into a far country and a marriage amid some savage tribe. The speaker in the second poem is the same, the boy grown old. With exquisite adroitness Tennyson traces the mental development. The years have brought reconciliation to the rival, and a stronger, more reasonable, love for Edith, the woman whom the speaker has eventually married.

> 'She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,
> Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so lowly-sweet,
> Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her tender feet.'

But the old passionate ardour is not lost; it has only shifted its standpoint. It is no longer against a wealthy rival and the curse of gold that the speaker inveighs; the time has changed, and the speaker has changed with it. Now he is occupied with the rise of the mob; the uneducated, ignorant cry of 'Forward' maddens him. He sees the blatant orator of the hustings leading the people to the edge of an abyss that their inexperience cannot fathom: he watches them straining toward a development which is, in fact, deformity. The age of aristocracy has given place to the age of democracy, and the reaction to extremes is fatal. The fire of boyhood bursts out again to overwhelm the folly of the moment. He has gone 'in among the throngs of men,' and has sympathised with them; but he has no heart for revolution. As in the first poem he returned upon himself to rebuke his desire to rebel, so in the second he cries to the crowd about him not to follow the wild flickering of the fen-fires, but to guide their

calmer journey by the beacon-light of the polestar of Truth.

> 'Follow Light, and do the Right, for man can half-control his doom—
> Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.'

With a ruthless detail, too, he marks the more unlovely aspects of the age. The dynamite, 'the villainous centre-bit,' the 'roofs of slated hideousness,' – all inspire him with a loathing of the grosser struggle for life. He pierces into the heart of the city, to 'the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor,' to the thousand and one miseries half-begotten by the overpowering lust for gold. But even in the darkest despair he finds one ray of hope. A better age may, he feels, be slowly gathering out of all this wretchedness.

> 'Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?
> Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.
>
> Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be
> Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.'

And so he leaves Locksley Hall to its new boy-lord, and leaves it with a trust in its brighter future.

Much has been said in disapproval of the later 'Locksley Hall'; but the poet, who is not afraid to teach his people their limitations, cannot rest upon an undisputed popularity. The poem had too much vigour, too much truth, to please the easy-going optimist. But Truth is the test by which all literature must be tried; and 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After' will be recognised, when the verdict of many more than another sixty years has been pronounced upon it, to be one of the clearest, most unsparing pictures of its

age to be found in contemporary literature. And when that recognition ripens round it, Tennyson's sincerity will not be without its reward.

The two years that followed were comparatively silent. In May 1889 was published, to secure copyright, in an edition ultimately reduced to two copies, a lyric entitled 'The Throstle'; this is a mere leaflet, consisting of a title and one page of text. Later on this poem was widely circulated in the periodical press. It was not till the end of 1889 that a new volume appeared. The 'Jubilee Ode' of 1887 was scarcely popular; its changeful metre and rough eloquence seemed to evade criticism. But in August 1889, on his eightieth birthday, Tennyson was the recipient of quite a number of literary compliments. None was heartier or more sincere than the letter (it must have been almost the last) which he received from Robert Browning. 'Let me say,' said the brother-poet, 'that I associate myself with the universal pride of our country in your glory; and in its hope that for many and many a year we may have your very self among us,—secure that your poetry will be a wonder and delight to all those appointed to come after. And for my own part let me further say, I have loved you dearly. May God bless you and yours.' Four months later the kindly spirit that prompted these lines had passed into the silence.

The birthday was also graced by an exquisite sonnet from the pen of the Laureate's friend, Mr. Theodore Watts; who, it may be added, after the poet's death, wrote for *The Athenæum* what was, perhaps, the most graceful and tender of all the

tributes to his memory. Mr. Watts has, with kindly courtesy, permitted the reprint of his sonnet here.

'*The Eightieth Birthday*

Another birthday breaks : he is with us still.
There thro' the branches of the glittering trees
The birthday sun gilds grass and flower : the breeze
Sends forth, methinks, a thrill—a conscious thrill
That tells yon meadows by the steaming rill—
Where, o'er the clover waiting for the bees,
The mist shines round the cattle to their knees—
"Another birthday breaks : he is with us still !"

For Nature loves him—loves our Tennyson :
I think of heathery Aldworth rich and rife
With greetings of a world his song hath won :
I see him there with loving son and wife,
His fourscore years a golden orb of life :
My proud heart swells to think what he hath done.'

The month which saw Robert Browning's death, and the publication of his last work, saw, too, a new book from Tennyson's pen—'Demeter and other Poems,' issued in December 1889. Of the twenty-eight poems which composed the volume, six at least were worthy of Tennyson's ripest prime, while the whole book must be regarded as a marvellous collection of riches, when we consider that the author was eighty years old at the time of its publication. 'Demeter and Persephone' is with 'Tithonus' and 'Œnone.'

'Thou that hast from men,
As Queen of Death, that worship which is Fear,
Henceforth, as having risen from the dead,
Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
From buried grain thro' springing blade, and bless
Their garner'd Autumn also, reap with me,
Earth-mother, in the harvest hymns of Earth
The worship which is Love, and see no more
The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly glimmering lawns
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of Torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel.'

'Vastness,' which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* some three years before, is full of the sentiment of the second 'Locksley Hall,'—and, though it puzzled its critics at first, the more clear-sighted of its readers recognised its greatness from the outset. Mr. W. E. Henley has never, perhaps, spoken more vigorously or persuasively than he did in this relation.

"In "Vastness,"' he said, 'the insight into essentials, the command of primordial matter, the capacity of vital suggestion, are gloriously in evidence from the first to the last. Here is no touch of ingenuity, no trace of "originality," no sign of cleverness . . . nothing is antic, peculiar, superfluous; but here in epic unity and completeness, here is a sublimation of experience expressed by means of a sublimation of style. It is unique in English, and, for all that one can see, it is like to remain unique this good while yet.'

'Owd Roä' ranges with 'The Northern Farmer,' and is a strong and pathetic example of its class. 'Forlorn' is more vivid than 'The Flight,' and only a little less dramatic than 'Despair.' It is the familiar story of a seduction, told in a metre of wailing, heart-rending melancholy:

> 'Murder would not veil your sin,
> Marriage will not hide it,
> Earth and Hell will brand your name,
> Wretch, you must abide it,
> In the night, O the night,
> Long before the dawning.'

'The Ring' tells a touching tale in dialogue, sympathetic and retentive. 'Happy' is an intense but somewhat repellent story of a leper's bride, who refuses

to be severed by disease from the man she worships. 'Romney's Remorse,' another of the dramatic monologues, is enriched by a love-song, with a yearning melody:

> 'Beat upon mine, little heart! beat, beat!
> Beat upon mine! You are mine, my sweet!
> All mine from your pretty blue eyes to your feet,
> My sweet!'

In 'Merlin and the Gleam,' a kind of after-echo of the Arthurian cycle, the poet treats in allegory the life that strives calmly onward to the far-off heavenly goal. It is but one more utterance of the poet's daily creed. 'The Throstle' is a voluptuous burst of music, with an assumption of the bird-cry which is even more faithful than the earlier note of 'The Owl'; while in 'Far, far away' there is another onomatopœic echo of exquisite melody:

> 'What sound was dearest in his native dells?
> The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells
> Far-far-away.'

And last, yet incomparably first, stands that perfect poem which is above criticism—composed (it is said) during the poet's passage across the Solent—'Crossing the Bar.' It has been translated into Greek and Latin, and set to music; but no alien note was needed to complete the dignified perfection of its harmony. There is no more beautiful utterance in all the range of English verse.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLOSING YEAR

WITH an extraordinary vigour and freshness Lord Tennyson continued, even after

> 'The century's three strong eights had met
> To drag him down to seventy-nine,'

to produce work of the very highest literary excellence. The later years of his life were spiritedly free from any sense of decay, any indication that his natural force had abated. The work of a poet of advanced years is wont to prove no more than an echo of his earlier inspiration. As a rule, there remains a certain facility of expression, and an aptitude for melody, while the animating thought withers, and the poetry lacks grasp and actuality. Moreover, the old chords are struck with wearisome fidelity; the search for something new has lost its charm. But with Tennyson the custom was broken.

It was left for his eighty-third year to lead him into an entirely new field, and to enrich literature with a pastoral, fresh with the breath of the meadows, spangled with elfin fancies, and flashing with the gossamer of fairy wings. The dreamland of Titania's palace, which the critic would assign as the home of the boy-lover, was with Tennyson the mansion of old



TENNYSON'S BRIDGE, FARRINGFORD.

age. He rested in Sherwood after the burden and heat of the day.

His surroundings may well have helped him to his subject. For years his time was chiefly spent in the country. The home at Farringford was full of rustic charm, rendered the more emphatic by its seclusion. The house is so entirely enclosed by trees as to escape the notice of the passer-by. At the back of the garden, a bridge, spanning the road which encircles the estate, opens up a view of Freshwater Bay, with the Arch and Stag Rocks in the foreground. Here the poet was used to stand evening after evening in the moonlight, looking down across the thick undergrowth towards the glitter of the sea. The dell might, even to a less active imagination, seem alive with fairies, or peopled by sleeping foresters. It is a woodland of enchantment, and amid its inspiration 'Robin Hood and Maid Marian' grew into life.

While the play was ripening, little happened to change the poet's mind, or divert it from its inspiration. In the spring of 1891 he was cruising in the Mediterranean; and in the March of that year 'To Sleep,' a tender lyric, with 'a touch of sadness in it,' was printed in *The New Review*. This song afterwards took its place in the new play. Four introductory lines from the Laureate's pen prefaced in the same year an edition of *Pearl*, edited by Mr. Israel Gollancz. The echoes of the world without reached him but faintly. When they did come, they found him ready with his interest. From his dream of Sherwood Forest he could awake to indignation at

the persecution of the Russian Jews. 'I can only say,' he wrote, during the autumn of 1891, 'that Russia has disgraced her church and her nationality. I once met the Czar. He seemed a kind and good-natured man. I can scarcely believe that he is fully aware of the barbarities perpetrated with his apparent sanction.' The spirit that was stirred into fire by the Eyre rebellion was still smouldering at Tennyson's heart.

Meanwhile, his time was divided between Farringford and Haslemere; and it was not till towards the close of 1891 that the general public learned that Mr. Augustin Daly had, after his visit to England, taken back with him to New York the manuscript of a play by Tennyson, founded on the fortunes of Robin Hood. Early in the following year rumour became more active; forecasts and synopses of the action appeared in various papers, and interest was energetically awakened. On the 17th of March 1892 curiosity was satisfied. Mr. Daly on that day produced 'The Foresters: Robin Hood and Maid Marian,' in New York, and on the same morning, at ten o'clock, Mr. Irving lent his theatre for a copyright performance of the play by members of his own company. This early hour was selected in order to elude the critics, of whom but a single representative, it is reported, contrived to be present. A copyright performance is usually a crude entertainment enough, without rehearsal or embellishment; but on the present occasion the piece had been frequently played over beforehand, and the characters were suitably and tastefully dressed. Mr. Acton Bond appeared

as Robin Hood, and Miss Violet Vanbrugh had made a graceful study of Maid Marian. Lord Tennyson subsequently sent a copy of his works to every member of the company employed in the representation. These trifling facts, however, are of interest merely as curiosities: the performance in New York is the actual centre of our attention. There everything that good taste and liberality could do had been done; the woodland scenery was elaborated with artistic picturesqueness, and the principal characters were played by the first dramatic talent of America. Mr. John Drew was the Robin Hood, Miss Ada Rehan the Maid Marian. Cablegrams assured London of the complete success of the production, and none of the Laureate's plays has received so general an approval. Less than a fortnight later the book was in the hands of English readers, and critics were expressing their hope that 'The Foresters' might soon be seen upon the London stage. But many elements go to the making of a dramatic success; and to argue that a play which had charmed an American audience, would be equally popular in England, was to reckon without a host of contingencies. The good fortune of 'The Foresters' as a stage-play was, indeed, largely due to the circumstances of its production. The American mind is always attracted to the romance of chivalry more readily than the English. The people of the new country miss in themselves that environment of the past which is a matter of daily course to the people of the fatherland, with whom the familiarity of their history has bred a

certain carelessness for the relics of antiquity. It is always the American who hovers about Westminster Abbey, and spends his morning at the Tower of London: it is in America that 'As You Like It' has received its most artistic interpretation. It was natural, then, that America should appreciate 'The Foresters' to the full. The pastoral charm, the fresh, breezy atmosphere of woodland life, the fascination of the brake where every bush concealed its bowman, the chivalrous love of man and maid held pure in the freedom of the forest,—all these things had a peculiar enchantment for the American taste, a charm which their familiarity denied to the English. The atmosphere was the secret of success, and the pastoral triumphed. It is by no means so certain that it would have succeeded in London. The English playgoer and the English critic expect, before all things, technical construction: there must be progress, continuity, and completion; the situations must be evolved through recognised methods, and developed at regulated intervals. The English drama of the day is constructed upon an uniform scaffold, and the fashion of its building cannot be altered with impunity. But Tennyson has always refused to frame his work to the orthodox pattern, and of all his plays 'The Foresters' is the least technically dramatic. To say this is not to depreciate its exceptional excellences. 'The Foresters' should, in fact, be judged from a point of view different from that which serves for a study of 'Harold' or 'The Cup.' It should be regarded as a masque, as a pastoral play for a summer's afternoon in the woods,

an echo of mediævalism, when thought was free, and art unfettered. It has no serious purpose; from beginning to end it is a medley of romance and dreamland. One critic, ingenious rather than perspicacious, has insisted that every play of Tennyson's involves a great struggle between antagonistic motives. In 'Queen Mary,' in 'Becket,' in 'Harold' the struggle is obvious; in 'The Foresters' the critic discovers the contest to lie between just and unjust rule, in the persons of Richard and John. But 'The Foresters' is no story of a struggle: the tension never strains into seriousness. It is just a woodland masque, catching an Elizabethan echo at every turn. At one moment Marian is with Rosalind in Arden, at another with Viola in Illyria. Kate and Little John are Shakespearian to their last word, and the fairies have floated out of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' There is no character sketch, no dramatic analysis, no actual situation. It is all the life of the wood, outlawed but not lawless, helping the weak in their distress, eager to put down the mighty from their seat.

'We leave but happy memories to the forest.
We dealt in the wild justice of the woods.
All those poor serfs whom we have served will bless us,
All those pale mouths which we have fed will praise us—
All widows we have holpen pray for us,
Our Lady's blessed shrines throughout the land
Be all the richer for us.'

This is the life of freedom without licence, a life that can scarcely thrive outside romance. It was so that they lived in Arden. Tennyson's new departure is a return to the fields of our greatest dramatist;

even the songs, with their infinite melody, remind us of Amiens in the forest. It may be, indeed, that this was the kind of play for which the Laureate's talent had the strongest inclination. Here his fancy could find full scope; here there was no need for technical ingenuity. He could wander through Sherwood free, and move his puppets to his will. And the result of this freedom is that, within its limits, 'The Foresters' has scarcely a fault. But since it needs the same sense of freedom in the actors, the same atmosphere of peace under the greenwood tree, the same intangible charm of elf-land, it is perhaps to be hoped that it will *not* be placed upon the London stage. For by the blaze and roaring bustle of the Strand we lose the touch of pastoral simplicity without which 'The Foresters' is nothing.

As we leave the work one moment and turn to the man, we find Tennyson, during the later years of his life, more wedded than ever to that country solitude from which 'The Foresters' emerged. The Tennyson of this time has been tenderly described by one privileged to be his friend,—Mr. Theodore Watts. 'His exclusiveness,' he says, 'is entirely mythical. He was the most hospitable of men. . . . As deeply as some men feel that language was given to men to disguise their thoughts, did Tennyson feel that language was given to him to declare his thoughts without disguise. He knew of but one justification for the thing he said, namely, that it was the thing he thought. . . . Behind this uncompromising directness was apparent a noble and a splendid courtesy; for above all things, Tennyson

was a great and forthright English gentleman.' The Tennyson whom his friends knew was ever so; and Mr. Watts's appreciation is invaluable as an insight into that private life which was shared by but few chosen. For life at Farringford was singularly secluded. Before noon on a fine morning the poet might be seen walking through Freshwater, sometimes alone, sometimes at the side of Lady Tennyson's bath-chair. Otherwise he was little found. The time of pilgrimages, foretold by Arthur Hallam, had begun: and it found the Laureate strangely disinclined to observation. It was natural, for the spirit of the moment was, as Mr. Watts remarks, over-inquisitive. To be a public character is not to be public property. Still a certain amount of enthusiasm defied suppression; and, during the years we have been surveying, quite a library of literature had clustered round Tennyson's home and work. Of this the critical portion was naturally the most valuable. Of several short volumes on 'In Memoriam,' one by the Rev. A. Gatty, first published in 1881, has received the Laureate's approval, and several explanatory notes from his own pen. The Rev. F. W. Robertson of Brighton had, nineteen years before this, published an analysis of the poem which, until it was superseded by Mr. Gatty's work, stood as the best critical monograph on the subject. In 1882 Mr. S. E. Dawson issued a very full and valuable study of 'The Princess,' which was followed ten years later by a similar work by Mr. Percy M. Wallace, apparently intended in the first place for the use of an Indian University. Mr. E. C. Tainsch's *Study of the Works*

of Alfred Tennyson (1868, 1869, 1870) treated of the 'Idylls of the King,' in a very full and interesting manner; and Mr. H. J. Van Dyke's *Poetry of Tennyson* (1890) included some biographical notes, chiefly concerned with the earlier years of the poet's life. Mr. J. Huband Smith, in his *Notes and Marginalia* (1873), gathered together a few facts of interest, but was unfortunate in his method of arrangement and recital. The fullest and best biographical sketch appeared in 1884 from the pen of Mr. H. J. Jennings: it is characterised throughout by discretion and good taste. Beside these books, and beside, too, an infinity of slighter works, several artistic volumes have been concerned with illustrations of Tennyson's homes and surroundings. Prominent among these is the Rev. A. J. Church's *In the Laureate's Country* (1891), a very tasteful volume of views, with a brief description in accompaniment. Mr. J. Cuming Walters' *In Tennyson Land* (1890) was the first of many attempts to identify the localities in which several of the Laureate's poems are placed. The work was interesting as the origin of much criticism of the kind,—a criticism, however, which is apt to prove ingenious rather than reliable. Several of the statements were corrected by Mr. Hallam Tennyson in a letter to *The Athenæum*, and the credit of the volume was somewhat impugned by the correspondence. In 1892 Mr. George Napier published a further work—*The Homes and Haunts of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, an artistic and literary success. And, last of the list, we may mention that which is perhaps the most valuable—

Tennysoniana by R. H. Shepherd. This little volume contains a rich collection of naked facts, and a wealth of bibliographical notes. The second edition (1879) is the better and more reliable. It was thus that Tennyson literature multiplied, and that incrustation of work, which always settles about a great name, began to gather round the Laureate. It is safe to say that, within another decade, the number of such books will have been doubled.

In the months that followed he production of 'The Foresters' Tennyson was at Farringford. The early spring found him ailing, but in June he was among the Channel Isles, cruising in Colonel Crozier's yacht *Assegai*, while Haslemere was being redecorated for his return in the later summer. In company with his son, Mr. Hallam Tennyson, he visited, during the third week in June, the principal places of interest in Guernsey and Jersey, the family returning to Haslemere on June 30th.

The late summer of 1892 was spent at Aldworth, whither several distinguished visitors found their way —the Duke of Argyll during July, Dr. Jowett in September. During the former month the Laureate paid a hurried visit to London, and within a few days of his return to Surrey it was whispered that Mr. Irving intended to produce 'Becket' early in the following year. The suggestion seemed at first an improbable one; but any doubt was removed by Mr. Irving's own announcement of the project on the last night of his summer season at the Lyceum. A few weeks later it was reported that Tennyson was correcting the proofs of a new volume, a collection of

poems to be entitled 'Akbar's Dream.' The end of his eighty-third year was evidently to find the poet full of energy and expectation. His brain was astir, and his interest in passing events was unabated. The Shelley Centenary, which was celebrated at Horsham on August 4th, was rendered more notable by the ornament of his name as President; the General Election elicited from him a violent but characteristic utterance, deploring the possibility of Home Rule. 'I love Mr. Gladstone,' he said, 'but hate his present Irish policy.' Gladstone and Tennyson! The two names fall together with a singular fitness. Each numbering his eighty years and over; each endowed with almost unshaken vigour and mental power, each holding his audience in his age with an even keener affection, and drawing it into a still more loyal adherence than he had commanded in the dawn of his popularity and power. *Par nobile ducum*, whom the least sympathetic opponent cannot but admire.

With the approaching production of 'Becket,' and the publication of 'Akbar's Dream,' it seemed as though the winter of 1892 would be a memorable season in Tennyson's life. But for him the winter was never to come.

The rumours of these new movements were but fresh in our midst, when a graver report centered our attention upon Aldworth. Tennyson was ill. An attack of influenza had become complicated by gout, and his condition was considered serious. So wrapped in peace and secresy was the home at Haslemere that the Laureate had been ill for five

days before the news reached the ears of the neighbouring villagers. On Monday, October the third, it was known in London that Tennyson was sinking; and, though he rallied for one night, there was never any real accession of strength: the end was merely a question of time. By Wednesday night the doctors had given up hope; and very peacefully and at ease, his room bathed in a flood of moonlight, he passed away about half-past one on the morning of Thursday, October the sixth. His family were about him at his death.

It is only after our losses that we come to understand their extent, and it is probably reserved for the next few years to prove to us all that English literature has suffered in Tennyson's death. One thing we all appreciated with the first whisper of the news: the greatest national poet that England has produced in the present century, the sweetest singer, save only Shelley, that has charmed us for a hundred years, has passed away. And yet there should be little room for weak, effeminate lament. He died, as every creative genius would surely choose to die, in fulness of years and honour—almost, it seemed, in the recrudescence and plenitude of his power. With the cycle of his fourscore years completed, he could sport among his foresters in Sherwood with no less spontaneity than he lavished on his garden-games with the Lilian and Rosalind of his boyhood. The capacity and the variety of his genius remained unwithered by age, unstaled by custom, rich and enchanting to the last. 'Truly one of the great of the earth.' It was so his friend described him in

the first blush of his promise; it is so that he appears to us to-day. And the sincere regret and sympathy with which England sets his name upon the roll of her dead immortals must, of a surety, be softened by a sense of a life lived to its completion, and a work perfected.

'Twilight, and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark.

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar.'

Within a fortnight of the impressive ceremony at Westminster Abbey, Tennyson's new volume, the proofs of which had received his own correction, was issued to the public. 'Akbar's Dream' remained one of the principal riches of the book, which, however, took its title from 'The Death of Œnone,' a poem which was almost characteristic of the author's prime. Rumour whispers that this latest volume is not necessarily the last, that much remains to be printed, if the late Laureate's literary executor thinks well. But, whatever may follow, 'The Death of Œnone' must be the last selection to have passed under its author's

own review, the last utterance made with his full and final authority. As such it acquires a tender, personal value above the worth and merit of its literary performance. It carries with it the sentiment of a legacy, a gift in whose presence our thanks are hushed, our criticism silent.

It was not to be expected that there should be any new note sounded : no new note was desirable. The surest consolation in loss was the sense of an ideal unimpaired, a creed unshaken to the end. It was best to find the Master, after many days, singing with the hope and enthusiasm of youth, a little calmed, a little resigned, but inspired still by the old creed, the old cry of 'Onward.' It was good, too, to meet him with an eye undimmed, with the same clear sight for beauty, the same unfailing power of fixing the scene upon his page. The poetry of his youth scarcely contained a truer picture than that of Œnone's desolation. Once more the surroundings harmonise with the sentiment: once more the detail, vividly condensed, is given with the old skill and unlaboured fidelity.

> 'Œnone sat within the cave from out
> Whose ivy-matted mouth she used to gaze
> Down at the Troad ; but the goodly view
> Was now one blank, and all the serpent vines
> Which on the touch of heavenly feet had risen,
> And gliding thro' the branches overbower'd
> The naked three, were wither'd long ago.
> And thro' the sunless winter morning-mist
> In silence wept upon the flowerless earth.
>
> And while she stared at those dead cords that ran
> Dark thro' the mist, and linking tree to tree,
> But once were gayer than a dawning sky
> With many a pendent bell and fragrant star,
> Her Past became her Present.'

Or again, where Paris reappears, every word is a touch of colour.

'Paris, no longer beauteous as a God,
Struck by a poison'd arrow in the fight,
Lame, crooked, reeling, livid, thro' the mist
Rose, like a wraith of his dead self, and moan'd.'

It would be hard to trace any failure of strength here: not only is the picture complete, but the full, rich melody of the metre is still unbroken. It is even fuller and richer in 'Saint Telemachus.'

'And once a flight of shadowy fighters crost
The disk, and once, he thought, a shape with wings
Came sweeping by him, and pointed to the West,
And at his ear he heard a whisper "Rome"
And in his heart he cried "The call of God!"
And call'd arose, and, slowly plunging down
Thro' that disastrous glory, set his face
By waste and field and town of alien tongue,
Following a hundred sunsets, and the sphere
Of westward-wheeling stars; and every dawn
Struck from him his own shadow on to Rome.'

It is the voice of Tennyson. One critic may complain that there is little novelty in the volume, another may fear that it will scarcely add to his fame. But the one indisputable fact remains: there is no living singer who could sing as he, even in his last melody. The haunting echo of the metre, as we end the poem, and listen to the rhythm surging through our brain, sweeps back with a desolate 'Never more!' There is left us but the gratitude that we have so much to read and re-read over and over again.

The contents of the volume, other than those in the peculiarly Tennysonian metre, are, perhaps, less permanent. 'Charity' belongs to the class of which

'The Flight' is a leading example, and it is even more homely than its predecessors. Perhaps it was an earlier work, belonging, as Mr. H. D. Traill has suggested, to the 'Enoch Arden' period; a cycle which can never be a favourite with the Laureate's admirers. 'The Bandit's Death' has a more romantic environment, but it lacks dramatic fire. There is far more spirit and eagerness in 'The Dreamer.'

> 'Moaning your losses, O Earth,
> Heart-weary and overdone!
> But all's well that ends well,
> Whirl, and follow the sun.'

'The Churchwarden and the Curate' is as admirable a sketch in dialect as any of the older favourites. One feels how much Trench would have appreciated its quality.

'Akbar's Dream' gives prominence to a tendency, already sufficiently indicated in this study, which separates the poet from sympathy with outward ceremonial, and centres his soul upon the perfection and pursuit of the ideal.

> 'What are forms?
> Fair garments, plain or rich, and fitting close
> Or flying looselier, warm'd but by the heart
> Within them, moved but by the living limb,
> And cast aside, when old, for newer.'

Forms and creeds, he holds, will one day be merged, like Plato's sciences, in the one ideal truth, the crown of knowledge and love.

> 'Neither mourn if human creeds be lower than the heart's desire!
> Thro' the gates that bar the distance comes a gleam of what is higher.
> Wait till Death has flung them open, when the man will make the Maker
> Dark no more with human hatreds in the glare of deathless fire!

It was his first message: it remains his last. Amid social change and political doubt he continued true to the old ambition, the slow, steady progress to universal union.

'Call me not so often back
Silent voices of the dead.'

he cries. There is to be no delay, no regret, no hesitation.

'On, and always on!'

CHAPTER XV

THE VOICE OF THE AGE

THE period we have traversed in following this serene and unblemished life from the cradle to the grave is the longest which the biographer of any great English poet has to encounter. Wordsworth was venerable in what seemed extreme old age; but Tennyson had several years of public honour and private happiness before him when he crossed the limit of the duration of Wordsworth's life. As Victor Hugo to France, so Tennyson has been to England in the nineteenth century the symbol of longevity, the crowning proof that not all whom the gods love dearly die young. The long life of a foremost leader of thought gives stability to literature, and it is to this duration of Tennyson's existence that we have owed, to no small measure, the durability of the poetic tradition of our age. Although it is a commonplace that we live fast in this nineteenth century of ours, and that men change their tastes and opinions in it as they change their clothes, critical judgment and poetic taste have been singularly, and perhaps unprecedently, stable. A man born in the early part of Elizabeth's reign, and living to the age of the late Laureate, would have seen poetry spring out of barbarism into perfect

form and beauty, would have marked the rising and setting of Marlowe, of Shakespeare, of Spenser, the pre-eminence of the drama and its utter decline, would have experienced a total revolution in style and taste, and would have listened to the first accents of Dryden and Butler. Another, born when Pope was sharpening his fiery arrows, would have died leaving poetry in the hands of Coleridge and Shelley. No such radical change takes place when one great and unchallenged master, productive through his whole length of years, holds the critics and the public with an eye that time does not fatigue or dim.

Hence, though poets have been many, and their inspiration genuine, not one but has in some degree acknowledged in his style his allegiance to Tennyson. If one exception be sought to this sweeping statement, it may be found in Robert Browning, in whom, though he owed to Tennyson in some degree the scheme of his dramatic monologues, it would be perhaps paradoxical to claim much or anything of the Tennysonian spirit. But Mrs. Browning met with the young genius of Tennyson at the outset of her career, and his masculine accents fascinated and made her captive. His infinite variety of metre and spontaneity of music struck the first haunting echo that woke into new tones in those songs of unexampled melody with which Mr. Swinburne assailed the ears of his contemporaries. His rich sense of colour and his delicacy of delineation were elaborated in the overburdened pictures of the pre-Raphaelites—in Rossetti and Mr. William Morris. The grand, full march of his blank verse is heard in the epic movement of

Matthew Arnold; its softer cadences, in their luxuriousness and their fluidity, have only too plainly inspired Sir Edwin Arnold and Mr. Lewis Morris. The domestic simplicity and impassioned erotic analysis of Mr. Coventry Patmore take forms that no predecessor of Tennyson would have employed. His keen observation of natural phenomena, and his sympathy with animal life, stirred a tenderness for 'helpless forms of fur and wings,' which was to develop in the lyrics of Mr. Edmund Gosse. The more dramatic and vivid of his ballads thunder, with a new vehemence, under the roll of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's 'The English Flag.' His polished, jewelled style has lent itself as a model for the 'crystalline completeness' of Mr. William Watson's clean-cut epigrams.

Almost every later poet has, half imperceptibly, and as a rule unconsciously, breathed in the atmosphere of the Tennysonian spirit. The elements of that spirit, complex in their separate forms, melt into one another simply and harmoniously. They fall into three main classes. First, those emotions which refer outwards to inanimate nature. Second, those which refer outwards to the poet's fellow-creatures. Third, those which refer inwards and become introspective. The briefest consideration will give us some idea of the nature and interrelation of these component parts of the spirit of Tennyson's verse.

The poet stands in a closer and more intimate relation to inanimate nature than did any of his predecessors. Keats had prepared the way for him by a wealth of colour, and a keen eye ever dwelling

on the object, apt to observe every detail of the scene, and to reproduce it with a luxurious fidelity. Wordsworth had prepared the way by a love of seclusion, a passion for the solitude of riverside and wood, and a studious affection for the books which he could read in the running brooks, the sermons in the stones. Crabbe had prepared the way by the harmony with which his domestic idylls were attuned to their humble surroundings, by his sense of the fitness of restraint and modulation. But the way was prepared not by one, but by all: Tennyson took something from each, and added much of his own. There were the richness of Keats's imagery in the early lyrics, the domestic tenderness of Crabbe in 'Dora,' the rustic pathos of Wordsworth in 'The May Queen.' But in all these poems there was something that was neither of Keats, nor of Wordsworth, nor of Crabbe. There was a refined subtlety of touch, an individual turn of expression, and, above all, an even more sympathetic attitude towards nature. Often and often in Tennyson the scene is the man, the surroundings reflect the situation. It is so with the lonesome melancholy of 'Tears, Idle Tears'; it is so with the Norland wind that pipes 'Oriana' down the sea; it is pre-eminently so with the drowsy sensuousness of the 'Lotos land.' Before the first failure of the order in 'Merlin and Vivien'

'A storm was coming, but the winds were still.'

The morning of 'The Last Tournament' breaks 'with a wet wind blowing.' The night of Enoch's death

'There came so loud a calling of the sea
That all the houses in the haven rang.'

And, as Arthur falls, the whole surroundings harmonise with the tragedy:

'And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burned at its lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea:
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear.'

Instances could be multiplied; but enough has been said to show the character of the sympathy. Some of the sentiment is Wordsworth's, but the peculiar delicacy which fits every mood to its surroundings is all Tennyson's own. It is one of the most individual and artistic of his contributions to the development of poetry.

The second element is that which carries the poet out of himself into a regard and sympathy for his fellow-men. Of this, one variety is personal, the other dramatic. In his own relation to his age Tennyson has turned but little, to the right hand or to the left, during the sixty years and more for which he has moved among his brothers. His attitude towards politics was the same at the General Election of 1892 as it was in the earlier struggles of the Reform Bill. He was for progress, but the progress by degrees. The intensity of ambition, which became inarticulate in the poets of the revolution, was harmonised into a broader enthusiasm, akin to the more settled temperament of the period. The placid im-

mobility, which threatened to stagnate in the verse of the reaction, was inspired by the impetus of a spirit of progress. And so, with no violent convulsion, with no immature energy, the old and the new spirits were merged into one another. And here was their philosophy:

'Some cry "Quick," and some cry "Slow,"
But while the hills remain,
Up hill "Too-Slow" will need the whip,
Down hill "Too-quick" the chain.'

The dominant sentiment is one of steady development, 'conserving the hopes of man.' An unenlightened affection for old forms and ceremonies is felt to be no less fatal to the state than a maddened yearning for unconsidered changes. There must be a development, but a development by degrees, steady and certain. The unnatural emancipation of women is satirised in 'The Princess'; careless inactivity is assailed in 'The Fleet'; ignorant revolution rebuked in 'Freedom' and 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After.' His is an ideal of moral and physical strength, perceived but restrained; his hero is the man who, being strong, is merciful; who walks in the middle way,—a law to himself.

'He who only rules by terror,
Doeth grievous wrong,
Deep as Hell I count his error.'

It is the ideal of Wordsworth, who traces the happy warrior in the man, who is

'By objects, which might force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;
Is placable—because occasions rise
So often that demand such sacrifice.'

But though the ideal is strength restrained, the sympathy is wider. It embraces every class of mankind, high and low, thinker and worker. It hastens to take upon itself—to try to comprehend—the emotions, the hopes, and fears, and aspirations of every variety of mind; and in this endeavour the poet becomes dramatic. Where he assumes not only the dramatic instinct, but the stage form, he is in the main Elizabethan. The dialogue of his dramas is essentially Shakespearian; the construction owes its difficulties to the same source. But Tennyson is most individual, and—by a strange union of genius with originality—actually most dramatic, in the dramatic utterances which take the form of poems, and are not strictly drama at all. None of his predecessors has used the dramatic monologue with his energy and directness: and it is in this class of poetry that he is supreme.

This dramatic element merges itself continually into the introspective element, till at times the two are with difficulty separable. For this reason the dramatic touch of 'Maud' was misunderstood, and 'Despair' bitterly condemned. The two elements, indeed, are often one. Throwing himself into the character he is portraying, adopting the emotion and the habit of thought, the poet then turns upon himself and analyses his assumed condition. He is at once dramatic and psychological. There is a tinge of Shelley in 'Maud,' for to him is due some of the lingering love for passion, and the charm of morbid melancholy. But the most of it is Tennyson's: and it is, perhaps, his most characteristic work. For it

shows, with a perfection of detail, the union of the dramatic and the psychological elements of his nature.

This short review of the characteristics which go to make the Tennysonian spirit has helped us, at the same time, to trace its development from the poetry of the preceding generation. Born into an age of reaction, Tennyson woke his world into new life. Each new impulse caught the spirit of the old, but the hand was stronger and the touch individual. And so, attuned to the sentiment of the age, the great surging rhythm of English poetry flows, from Shakespeare, through Tennyson, to inspire the singers that shall come hereafter. Tennyson stands, as it were, midway upon a mountain, catching the echoes from afar, and passing on the melody to his followers on the hillside. Every now and again such a poet takes his stand upon the height, and preserves to us the spirit of our song, so that the new and the old are never altogether out of harmony. And it is to these that we owe the continuity and perfection of the national literature.

But Tennyson's attitude is not merely preservative and proleptic: he stands in an even closer relation to his contemporaries.

In an earlier chapter we have noticed that two assistant factors go to the making of literary success—genius and opportunity. To the highest form of literary triumph another talent is needed,—the talent that reflects and represents the age in which it lives and moves. Scarcely any period has proved so sterile as to lack all share of literary activity; but it frequently

happens that many years elapse without the sound of an actually representative voice to find utterance for the fears and hopes of its generation. The thoroughly representative voice is stirred into life by some vigorous and vital movement in its environment: it is only in an age of change and development that one man can take upon him the habit of a people. But when once such a voice has spoken, the truest history of the age remains in the record of its utterance. The naked colligation of facts, the elaborate synthesis of comparison, are but the skeleton of history: the heart of the age beats in its truly representative poet. And it is in Tennyson that we find the quintessence of the aims and aspirations of the second half of the nineteenth century. In Tennyson's poetry deep calls out to deep at the meeting of two great waters, the poetry of the earlier and later periods of the cycle. But even more distinctly there is heard in Tennyson's poetry the steady, prolonged undertone of the age which it reflected, the moving music to which the history of the era was written.

The multitude of phrases and sentiments culled from Tennyson for daily quotation proves how intimately his philosophy has entered into the life of the people for whom he sang. Except Shakespeare, and perhaps Pope, no English poet is so full of epigrams which stand as laws of life. He has caught the spirit of the people and crystallised it into literature, showing the age, in the process, a faithful similitude of its own soul.

The spirit of the age was analytical, psychological, dramatic. It was an age marked by a struggle be-

tween doubt and faith, from which faith rose conqueror. Every effort of the contest was recorded in Tennyson's verse. 'The Two Voices,' 'The Vision of Sin,' and 'In Memoriam,' trace an introspective analysis, seeking after the truth, whose final word is given to the unquestioning faith of 'Crossing the Bar.' The 'one clear call' finds the poet ready and fearless—

> 'I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
> When I have crost the bar.'

The age was not only introspectively analytic, it was dramatic. Its spirit found vent, not in thought alone, but in action; and the active side of the age had its literary counterpart in 'Maud,' and the more dramatic 'Ballads.'

The task of the poet was to sift and combine the lesser voices of antagonism, to separate the tithe of truth from the mass of falsehood, and to fuse the many elements into one perfect amalgam. When this combination was effected, the true spirit of the age was discovered. Therefore it is that Tennyson is never with the revolutionist, nor yet with the dullard; he is never in the forefront, but always among the first to enter the stormed citadel. As each bold theory of science was established by evidence, he accepted it in a mitigated form. As each new political change broadened down to the level of calm freedom, he welcomed it as a wholesome precedent. Never advancing rashly, he never lagged behind; the crowd of progress, as it stormed by, found him—not, as Plato's philosopher, hiding in the shadow of the wall—but following steadily by its side. Only, while the

crowd wandered from the highway by devious alleys to find the true path after many days, he waited to follow, till it was once more safe upon its journey.

'Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.'

Truth, he knew, lay not in instant acceptation of the unproven hypothesis, nor in blind adherence to outward form and ceremonial. With a calm strength and unbiassed judgment he took what good the age had to give, and threw aside the evil. And having proved the goodness of it, he proclaimed it from the housetops. Such was the poet: such too, was the man. The truest study of his life will be inspired by a study of his work. No sketch, no outline of facts and dates can give us the man as he stands pictured between the familiar green covers of the collected edition. All the principal characteristics are mirrored there. The calm energy of will, the troubled but unbroken faith, the wide-souled sympathy with mankind, the scorn of things little and of low repute, the reticence towards publicity, the love of love,—all these things were written in Tennyson's poetry. There we find the record of a life that followed no party-cry, was seduced by no specious argument from the open road of loyalty—that sided with no theological oppression, nor sympathised with any narrowness of sect or school. It was a life that chose to stand apart from the hue and cry of the age, that walked *in fallentis semita vitæ* by paths of seclusion and peace. But the quiet way was not solitary. It ran, step by step,

beside the high-road of the century, within hearing of the struggling multitude. And watching the men, his 'brothers, men the workers,' marking every aspect of their fight for existence, sympathising with them, crying to them, now with the fiery energy of a Son of Thunder, now with the tenderer accents of a Son of Consolation, Tennyson was a ceaseless influence to his age. He showed the toilers what, in the excitement of the burden and heat of the day, they could not see for themselves,—the end for which they were toiling, and the cause of their momentary failure. He found comfort for their disappointment, and sympathy for their success. He was the historian of their life, and the prophet of their hope.

And in the future, when the poetry of Tennyson ceases to represent the inspiration of the moment, when new hopes and new ambitions are firing new poets with ardour, his voice will not be without regard. For it is the voice of his age, an age which, with all its troubles, its doubts, and its possibilities, found for consolation one only faith, for assurance one only God. When, beyond these voices, the history of that age comes to be written, the record of the surest utterance of its heart of hearts, of the clearest reflection of its secret soul, will remain immortal in the poetry of Alfred Tennyson.

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